

STUDIES IN NAVAL HISTORY

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ARMY AND NAVY GAZETTE

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STUDIES IN NAVAL HISTORY

BIOGRAPHIES

BY

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PREFACE.

THESE STUDIES, now collected from the different magazines in which they have first appeared, will not, I hope, be considered as merely reclaimed waifs; for the idea of thus bringing them together in a more permanent form has always been present to me, even whilst originally writing them: and having carefully revised them by the light of the most recent published information and of our own Records, to which the Admiralty has been pleased to permit me free access, I offer them, not only as the relation of some stirring episodes in naval history, but as, each in its own way, a contribution to the earnest study of naval policy, strategy, or tactics.

I have only to add that the dates relating to Continental affairs are given throughout in New Style: those which belong to English correspondence, English records, or to purely English incidents are in Old Style; though occasionally I have given the double date. It is always a troublesome point, and I can only hope that I have minimised the customary confusion.

J. K. LAUGHTON.

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STUDIES IN NAVAL HISTORY.

CHAPTER I.

JEAN DE VIENNE.

CHAPTER FROM THE NAVAL HISTORY OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.¹

EVERYONE knows that, according to the Act of Parliament, it is on the Navy that, 'under the good Providence of God, the wealth, safety, and strength of the kingdom chiefly depend;' but there are probably few who have realised the full meaning of that grave sentence. Our fathers and grandfathers asserted our supremacy at sea with such vigour, and bequeathed to us such a transcendent prestige, that we are now apt to think of these not only as our inheritance, but as our natural and absolute right; to forget that the one, as the other, was of slow growth, has been often stoutly disputed, and at times even well-nigh blotted out. Such times are now of the distant past; it is our duty to provide that they remain so. But, as inculcating that duty, as enforcing the necessity for that provision, it is well, from time to time, to examine into our old history, and to retrace—

however painfully—the sad lessons of disasters now very imperfectly remembered. That we have suffered such is matter of fact; and even if we were disposed to forget them, others are not; for to them the memory -- like the glimmer of stars shining through the gloom - may serve to brighten the past, or possibly to indicate the future. It is the consciousness of this that leads me to recall the life and career of Jean de Vienne, Admiral of France during the latter quarter of the fourteenth century; a man of whom, it may be said, little is known in England beyond the bare name. Even by contemporary chroniclers his personality has been lost sight of, and his deeds have been attributed to others, misunderstood, slurred over, or omitted altogether; for, says Walsingham, with surely a very false notion of the duties of a historian the record of all these untoward affairs is so shameful, that we cloak in silence the things which we ought to write about.

John of Vienne,¹ or, in the official language of his time and country, Jehan de Vienne, Chevalier, Sire de Rolans et Amiral de France, was born, probably at Dole, in Burgundy, in 1341; the son of a family collaterally related, in no very distant degree, to the reigning House of Burgundy, and through it to that of France; the nephew of that elder John of Vienne with whom he is often confused, who, in 1347, was Governor of Calais, and whose name, as associated with our success, occupies a more prominent place in our histories than that of his more distinguished nephew. Of his childhood we have no account, further than that he passed it at the castle

¹ *Jean de Vienne, Amiral de France, 1341-1396.* Par le Marquis Terrier de Loray. Paris, 8vo, 1877.

of Rolans, the ruins of which still stand, near Besançon, in a commanding position on the river Doubs. At the age of eighteen, on the death of his father, he succeeded to his small estate, and would seem to have made his first experience in arms against the free companies, English in name, often under English leaders, which drew together the armed scum of Western Europe, and infested France and Burgundy after the Treaty of Bretigny. In 1363 he is said to have had command of a small party that, near Chambornay, on the Ognon, crushed and well-nigh exterminated one of the most formidable of these companies, and to have overthrown in single combat, with knightly spear, their leader, Guichard Monnot, presumably a Gascon. As a reward for this service, he was invested by the King of France with the lordship of the village of Villey, by accepting which he became the liegeman of the king, to whom he continued faithful during the rest of his life. In the war which raged between the parties of France and Navarre, rival claimants of the Duchy of Burgundy, and virtually of the French crown, he served with distinction under the Constable du Guesclin, whom he followed to Normandy in 1364, though it is doubtful whether he was still with him at Auray, or was then serving with the Duke of Burgundy, as he assuredly was in the following month and through the winter.

It was after his release from the captivity which befell him at Auray, that Du Guesclin led an army of adventurers into Spain to support the cause of the bastard Henry against his legitimate brother, the King of Castile, a war in which—as is familiarly known—the Black Prince afterwards interfered; in which he—as everywhere

else—achieved the most brilliant success, but in which also, it would seem, he contracted that mysterious disease which carried him off in the flower of his age. With this war, however, we are not now concerned. John of Vienne had no part in it, having embarked in a so-called crusade which the Count of Savoy led to the East in support of his cousin, the emperor John Palæologus, then held prisoner by the Bulgarians.

This crusade, the history of which is little known, may perhaps more properly be called a chivalrous adventure. A number of knights of different nations—Gascon, Burgundian, French, German, Flemish—gathered together to support the cause of christianity. Fourteen of them, including John of Vienne, with the Count of Savoy at their head, founded the Order of the Annunciation. They then took ship at Venice, and the force having rendezvoused at Coron, went on to Gallipoli, at that time in the hands of the Turks. This they carried by assault. They then passed into the Black Sea; occupied Sizeboli and other places of less importance; took Missirri by storm followed by general pillage and massacre, and invested Varna. The fortifications of Varna were strong, and the christians were but ill-provided to carry on a lengthened siege; the season too was late; and the adventure might have ended badly, had not the courage of the Bulgarians failed them. Negotiations were entered on, in which Jeanne de Vienne and Guillaume de Ganson represented the crusaders, with such good effect, that their present claims were acceded to, and the emperor sent back safely to Constantinople. Thither the Western warriors went for the winter, which would seem to have been spent in the usual

squabbles between Greek and Frank. In suing for assistance, the emperor had pledged himself to bring about the reunion of the Greek and Latin churches.^a This promise he now withdrew, and warned the crusaders to quit the town if they would avoid being massacred by the turbulent populace. They accordingly crossed over to Pera, waiting for the return of the good season. But the Turks, meanwhile, advanced and laid siege to Sizeboli. The emperor's tone altered; he undertook to repair to Rome; to have the reunion of the churches solemnly proclaimed there; he bound himself by hostages; he would agree to anything, if only they would drive back the Turk. This was again happily done, and the expedition returned home in the course of the summer of 1367.

Two years later the emperor did, to some extent, carry out his promises. He came to Rome; acknowledged, 'in the presence of four cardinals, the supremacy of the Pope and the double procession of the Holy Ghost,'¹ and paid public homage to Urban V in the church of St. Peter. But all this was probably due as much to future hopes as to past promises; and the real business of his visit to Italy would seem to have been to enlist some of the free companies in his service, and especially their distinguished leader, John Hawkwood. In this, for whatever reason, he was unsuccessful; but we are scarcely doing injustice to Hawkwood's memory if we suppose that he insisted on some more tangible recompense than promises; and the empty state of the imperial purse is proved by the fact that the emperor was detained at

¹ Gibbon: chap. lxvi.

Venice, virtually a prisoner for debt incurred on account of the expenses of his journey.

With this adventure the earlier part of Jean de Vienne's career may be said to close. He was still only twenty-six years of age; but since he was eighteen, he had been engaged in almost constant service of one sort or another; and though we have no account of the successive steps by which he rose to distinction, it appears throughout that, by mere force of character, and independent of the claim his birth might have given him, he took at once a foremost position in the armies of France. To have held responsible command, in a time of such unceasing peril, under Philip the Bold and Bertrand du Guesclin, was a training equivalent, and more than equivalent, to the experience of a score of years.

It was in 1369 that the King of France, Charles V, had resolved no longer to endure the disgrace and the issue of the Treaty of Bretigny. He had prepared for the inevitable resumption of hostilities with England by an unscrupulous economy,¹ by a wise administration of his finances, by secret negotiations with the gentry of Guyenne, themselves unwilling subjects of the English rule, and by a close alliance with Henry, the reigning King of Castile, whose personal inclinations were naturally adverse to the supporters of his brother and rival. The immediate cause of quarrel was the feeling that he was ready; that his great enemy, Edward III, was old and incapable; and that the terrible Black Prince was worn with sickness. The war that ensued was primarily, and of necessity, one on shore. To speak of it, as such, is no

¹ Amongst other instances of this may be counted the refusal to pay his father's ransom.

part of my present plan ; in its general results the story of it is familiar to every child amongst us ; and in its military details, would be but the description of an empire disintegrating itself from the natural want of cohesion, rather than from the force of the enemy's blows. • How much this was accelerated by the physical incapacity of the Black Prince, by the incompetence of his deputies and successors, and by the prudence of the French king, is all perfectly well known ; but there are probably many who have not realised the decisive character of the naval operations during the following ten years, and how curiously, how fatally, the supremacy of the sea was—for the time being—reversed.

From the beginning, Charles V would seem to have appreciated the advantage which the command of the narrow seas had given to England, ever since the battle of Sluys, in 1340, and of 'Les Espagnols sur mer,' in 1350. He had wished to contest it, and had assembled a large number of ships at Rouen and in the Lower Seine. But the naval resources of the country proved to be too weak, the war on shore too absorbing ; and the expedition to England, projected in 1369, fell through. But the alliance with Spain furnished means far beyond the power of France. • The King of Castile had at his disposal ships of a size and strength unknown in other countries, formidable opponents to the petty trading vessels which constituted the greater part of the English navy ; and though, these, when arrayed under the great Edward and his greater son, had been able to defeat and destroy the Spaniards off Winchelsea, in 1350, they were at a vast disadvantage when barely equal in numbers and under unskilled guidance.

The first meeting was decisive. It was on June 23, 1372, that the young Earl of Pembroke came off Rochelle with some forty vessels, armed, indeed, for war, but laden also with stores and reinforcements for the army. They were there met by the Spanish fleet, which had been waiting for them, under the command of the Admiral of Castile, Don Ambrosio Bocanegra. Although the Spanish force was superior, both by the size of the ships and their purely naval equipment, the English advanced at once to the attack, confident of victory, mindful of their past glories, and persuaded that the Spaniards were quite unable to withstand them. It took them but a short time to find out their mistake, and the fight became one not so much for victory as for life. The English, though in disorder and without cohesion, fought desperately; but their ships—so far as we can interpret the details of the battle—were driven on shore before night-fall, and were the next day burnt or captured; whilst of the men, those that were not killed were taken prisoners. The consequences of this defeat were most serious. The constable, taking advantage of the panic spread amongst the English, advanced in force into Poitou, and captured, almost on his march, Moncontour, Saint-Sèvre, Poitiers, Rochelle and Thouars; whilst the Duke of Lancaster, hastily ordered to Guyenne with reinforcements, was unable to sail by reason of continued bad weather, or was perhaps unwilling to do so whilst the Spanish fleet commanded the Bay of Biscay.

It has been suggested by some modern French writers ¹

¹ M. Guérin among others: but this is only one and not the most astounding of the many errors with which Guérin's *Memoir* (*Les Mains illustres*, pp. 37-68) is crowded.

that Jean de Vienne commanded a French division in the action off Rochelle; but this is not warranted by any evidence: there is no reason to suppose that even one French ship was there present, and it is sufficiently well established that, in the month of July, Jean de Vienne was serving under Du Guesclin at the siege of Saint-Sévère. So far as history goes, he held his first command at sea in the spring of 1373. It was then that the English fleet, under the Earl of Salisbury, had taken up a position at the mouth of the Seine, to the hindrance and stoppage of the coast and river navigation. To oppose this, the Count de Narbonne, then Admiral of France, having Jean de Vienne as his Vice-Admiral, assembled a force of one hundred ships, before which Salisbury had to retire. He drew back to Saint-Malo, whether he was followed by Narbonne; and considering himself unequal, passed on to Brest, where he remained for some months, virtually blockaded by the French, who kept possession of the Channel, and that with so firm a grip that the expedition under the Duke of Lancaster, instead of landing in Guyenne, as had been intended, was compelled to cross over at the Narrows, to land at Calais, and to undertake that disastrous march through France in the summer and autumn of 1373,¹ the result of which, more, perhaps, than any single episode of the war, sealed the fate of the English provinces.

¹ This account of Salisbury's expedition to Brest is very different from that generally given, and adopted by Longman (*Life and Times of Edward III.*, ii. 221-5) and Nicolas (*History of the Royal Navy*, ii. 150). I would submit that the tests of its truth are the two facts that Lancaster did land at Calais instead of Bordeaux, and that in July a general array of all fencible men in the maritime counties was ordered, to prevent invasion.

Almost as soon as it was known that Lancaster had landed, Jean de Vienne quitted the fleet, and had an important share in the military operations of that autumn; but afloat, the conclusion of the campaign of 1373 was less favourable to the French than its beginning had been. They lost the command of the Channel, several of their ships were taken, and the rest were content to seek for safety in their own harbours. The Viscount de Narbonne was old and feeble, and as the departure from the fleet of his second in command seemed to mark the turning point in its success, Jean de Vienne was not unnaturally appointed Admiral of France in his stead. In this there was nothing exceptional: the office of admiral, as that of constable, was at that time an active, not a mere honorary or titular appointment; and the greater number of former admirals had held it for only a few years. Jean de Vienne, appointed on December 27, 1373, held it till his death.

The rights of the Admiral of France were then relatively more extensive, and the power greater, than afterwards. He was the chief and ruler of the whole shipping of the country, not only from an administrative, but also from an executive, point of view; at once the minister of the navy and the commander-in-chief; and in each capacity nearly absolute and autocratic. Without his leave, no merchant ship could sail on a distant voyage, or on a cruise against the enemy: and it was his duty to see that every ship, so cruising, was suitably equipped, manned and armed. He could levy, for the king's service, all the ships of every French port. The jurisdiction of the admiralty courts included all nautical matters, civil or criminal; the judges were

appointed by the admiral, and their decisions given in his name. As direct emolument, he received two-thirds of all property found at sea, one-third of all thrown up on the shore, a tenth of all prizes from the enemy, a payment on the launch of every ship, and a yearly tax, bearing some relation to her size; besides large perquisites arising from his charge of provisions and stores: and as a personal honour, differing from and exceeding anything ever granted in England, every ship wore the admiral's banner.¹

With the exception of a few ships belonging to the king, the naval force of France then consisted of merchant ships levied by the admiral. This was also the case in England, where, however, the special charters of the Cinque Ports had in some measure provided a substitute for a standing navy. Charles V was quick to see the disadvantage of the system, both to commerce, which it annihilated, and to warlike efficiency, which, in a fleet of small trading ships, hastily manned, without experience or discipline, could scarcely be said to exist. He had already endeavoured to increase the number of royal ships, but it does not seem that any real advance was made until after the appointment of John of Vienne as admiral. It is difficult to say that the energy then developed was all his; but it is at least permitted us to believe that it was very directly due to

¹ 'Droits et Pré-éminences de l'Amiral de France,' in *The Black Book of the Admiralty*, i. 443 et seq. The usage of wearing the admiral's banner continued far into the sixteenth century, in the French fleet of 1545 the ships wore the flag of Annebault, Gules, a cross vair. Jean de Vienne's arms, which were, presumably, worn by the French ships during the operations detailed in the following pages, were Gules, an eagle displayed or.

that man whose accession to office was the signal for victorious enterprise, and whose conduct on different occasions would show that he had himself a large share of mechanical and constructive genius. The combat off Rochelle had established the superiority of ships built and equipped for war; the progress almost daily made in the use of guns tended continually to make this superiority greater; and the naval efforts of France took the direction of building ships distinctly as ships of war, bigger and stronger than any that England could oppose to them. A small dockyard and arsenal at Rouen,¹ dating back in its origin to the early days of Norman rule, and now enlarged, was chosen as the cradle and nursery of this infant navy; and ships on the Spanish model, of the then enormous size of 300 tons, were built and launched under the personal orders of Aubert Staucon, the master of the yard.

The construction of such a navy was, however, a work of time, and during the years immediately following his appointment as admiral, Jean de Vienne remained on shore, rendering good service to France, and notably in command of the siege of Saint-Sauveur,² a fortress of great strength, from which the English, without too strict a regard to the distinction between times of war and peace, dominated the Cotentin and the whole of Western Normandy. In consideration of payments, something of the nature of black-mail, they refrained from plundering or destroying in their immediate neigh-

¹ 'Le Clos des Galées de Rouen sous Charles V' (1364-1380), par M. de Lafaye (*Revue maritime et coloniale*, 1877, vol. liv. p. 686).

² The conduct of this siege is generally, but wrongfully, ascribed to Du Guesclin, who was not in Normandy at the time.

bourhood; but their maurading parties spread far and wide; and, with or without their sanction, free companies carried their evil fame to a still greater distance. Complaint after complaint had been laid before the king; but the siege of a first-class fortress with no sympathising inhabitants to render treacherous assistance, was a serious affair; and the course of the war, occupying the constable in Poitou, did not permit him to undertake it. It was thus left untried, till, in the summer of 1374, Jean de Vienne, being in Normandy, and with no active employment, received orders 'to take all necessary measures to reduce the place.' The means, however, were not put at his disposal; it was left for him to devise or create them as he best could.

•His first care was to isolate the garrison; and by fortified works on the Ouve, as well as by a sufficient squadron at its mouth, he succeeded at once in closing the direct water communication with England. But the troops under his orders were raw levies, which were laughed at or chased away by the hardened veterans of the garrison, who scourged the country more severely than ever, gathering in an enormous quantity of stores and provisions. Little by little, however, the admiral succeeded in forming his army, and in establishing it in front of Saint-Sauveur. Then followed, with varying fortune, those daily encounters which Froissart has loved to describe. But the event of the siege was to turn on the employment of the new artillery. By the beginning of 1375 the French had several large guns in position, throwing stones or masses of lead, which knocked down the ramparts or crushed through the houses. The effect of the cannonade, kept up, however slowly, by

night as well as by day, rendered the position of the garrison difficult, and when the admiral, determined to make it still more so, brought up two new cannons, of the enormous weight of 2,000 lbs. to throw a shot of 100 lbs., with the unheard of charge of 5 lbs. of powder, the result declared itself almost instantaneously. We may believe that these guns were specially designed by the admiral himself. The making of them was commenced on 21 March, and finished on 3 May; they were in position before Saint Sauveur on the 10th, and the agreement to surrender, if not relieved within six weeks, was signed on the 21st.

In signing this, the garrison had hoped to be relieved by the Duke of Bretagne, who did, indeed, advance at the head of 10,000 men. The French army prepared to meet him, supported by thirty small guns which the admiral had had newly constructed. These were of copper, with strengthening rings of iron, and had a wooden handle; they threw a leaden ball of small weight, and though actually swivels or wall-pieces, may be fairly considered as amongst the earliest types of the modern musket. No engagement, however, took place; for on learning that a truce had been concluded between the Kings of England and France, and being persuaded by Lord Latimer, King Edward's lieutenant in Bretagne, the duke drew back. But in spite of the truce it was maintained by the French that the convention was binding; and as they held the eight hostages given by the English, and were backed up by the two 100-pounders, their reading of the convention was admitted, and Saint-Sauveur was delivered up on 3 July.

In the following year the conduct of Lord Latimer

was the subject of a formal accusation; he was impeached by parliament as 'unprofitable to the king and the realm,' and as having—amongst more than 'three-score notable faults,' not now to our purpose—'sold the castle of St. Saviour's.' Of these crimes he was found guilty, and by judicial sentence was deprived of his office of chamberlain; his goods were confiscated, and he was ordered to be imprisoned during the king's pleasure, and 'thenceforth to be holden as infamous.'¹ The sentence was, however, revoked by the influence of the Duke of Lancaster after the death of the Black Prince.

Meantime, and whilst the ships were building at Rouen, the command afloat devolved on two foreigners, the one, Renier Grimaldi, a son or nephew of that elder Grimaldi who honourably commanded the Genoese contingent at the battle of Sluys; the other, Evan, or Owen—or, as he appears in the French chronicles, Yvain de Galles—who claimed to be, by right of birth, a Prince of Wales, robbed of his territory by the English. Evan may or may not have been an impostor; the question is of little consequence, and there is no evidence to decide it; but he was undoubtedly a brave man and an enterprising corsair; whether with the main fleet, or in command of detached squadrons, he, as well as Grimaldi, proved himself an able partisan; and the two, together with a Spanish squadron, during the years 1374-5, well nigh swept the English from the Channel, and wound up the campaign by the wholesale capture of a rich fleet of merchant ships returning from Bretagne on the faith of the truce.

The English owners and merchants petitioned for

¹ 'Contemporary Chronicle,' in *Archæologia*, vol. xxii. p. 225.

vengeance, but in vain. The only answer they received was that the king had done, and would continue to do, his best to procure redress. He was, in point of fact, powerless. The navy of England, which, thirty-five years before, had sufficed to exterminate that of France; which, twenty-five years before had crushed that of Spain, had now almost ceased to exist. The causes of this were numerous; but—bearing in mind that an English fleet was composed mainly of merchant ships levied for the king's service—they may be stated briefly as, firstly: the frequency of these levies during the thirty or forty years that the war had lasted, and the custom of enforcing the levies, often, several months before the ships were wanted, during which time they were kept up at their owners' cost; and secondly: the granting to foreigners, in return for heavy loans or payments, such privileges and monopolies as virtually put into their hands the whole export trade. By the action of these, it had come about that the merchants were impoverished, the seaport towns fallen into decay, their walls in ruins, the shipping not kept up; and the sailors, unable to find employment, had taken to other means of earning a livelihood. The evils were repeatedly stated in detail, both in petition to parliament, and by parliament to the king; but no remedy was applied, and for many years their effects continued.

In France, the interval of truce had been carefully utilised by the admiral. By the spring of 1377 he had, actually afloat and ready for sea, thirty-five large ships, built as men-of-war, armed with the newest guns, and well equipped; besides smaller vessels, merchantmen, which raised the total of his fleet to 120. These were

manned by about 15,000 men—sailors, men-at-arms, and archers. The force in itself was sufficiently formidable, and was still further increased by a Spanish contingent, which, by the terms of the treaty, numbered at least thirteen large ships.

The truce of two years ended on 24 June, 1377; and the fleet, assembled at Harfleur, immediately put to sea, under the command of the admiral in person, Grimaldi, Jean de Roye—a seaman of repute, the Sire de Torcy, and many other nobles and knights. A few ships were left to blockade the islands of Jersey and Guernsey, and prevent their attempting any raid on the coast of Normandy during the absence of the fleet, which at once, in accordance with a prearranged plan, crossed over to the coast of Sussex. On 29 June—eight days only after the death of King Edward—Jean de Vienne landed in the neighbourhood of Rye, the inhabitants of which, trusting in the natural strength of their town, and in a long immunity, had made but little preparation to receive the enemy. The troops which opposed the landing were driven back with great loss, and the town itself was occupied the same afternoon. It was proposed by the Sire de Torcy to keep possession of it as a stronghold on English soil, a counterpoise to Calais; but the admiral, whether unwilling to weaken his force by division, or judging that the place was not strong enough, refused; and notwithstanding the fierce anger and abusive language of De Torcy—who would seem to have had the more immediate command of the army or landing-party, he set fire to the town. From Winchelsea he was repelled with considerable loss, but at Rottingdean he was more successful, although, opposed by a strong

force levied by the prior of Lewes. Having defeated this, after a sharp encounter, he marched inland, took, plundered, and burnt the town of Lewes and the neighbouring villages, and withdrew slowly to the ships. Folkestone was sacked and burned on 20 July, Portsmouth—already rising into note as a naval port—came next, and further west Dartmouth and Plymouth were reduced to ashes. It would seem that nowhere, after the combat of Rottingdean, was any serious opposition offered. In the West little preparation had been made, for it was expected that the first force of the invasion would fall—as it had fallen—on the coast of Sussex, and would there—as it was not—be broken.

Laden with booty, the fleet returned to Harfleur by the beginning of August; and after refitting in haste, sailed again, to assist in the siege of Calais, then undertaken by the Duke of Burgundy. It was proposed on the way to threaten the coast of England, so as to prevent reinforcements being sent over to the besieged town; and the accident of weather turned the threat into a reality. An easterly wind drove the fleet to the Isle of Wight; this was found to be practically undefended; and on 21 August the admiral effected a landing—apparently near Yarmouth, which was immediately occupied; the island was ravaged, and a heavy contribution levied. The invaders then made a demonstration against Southampton; and hastily re-embarking, landed at Poole, which they burnt. On their way eastward, they sacked and burnt Hastings, threatened Dover, and finally arrived at Calais on 10 September. It was hoped that a more decided success than had yet been obtained would win back this town to France; but the season was too far

advanced, and bad weather compelled the fleet to withdraw to Harfleur. But the confidence of the English was rudely shaken ; and up to the beginning of winter a few active cruisers sufficed to blockade the coast, and by preventing the fishing, to cause very real distress to the inhabitants.

With the year 1378, the prospects of England in Normandy seemed to brighten. The King of Navarre had offered his daughter in marriage to Richard II. and with her, the several towns which he held in Normandy, Cherbourg alone excepted. The proposed treaty came at once to the knowledge of the King of France, who was quick to anticipate it, by seizing on the possessions of Navarre before they could be given up to the English. The Duke of Burgundy and the constable conducted the war by land ; by sea, the admiral occupied such places as were near the coast, and guarded against the possibility of any relief being sent from England. By the end of April, Pont Audemer alone remained, a town carefully fortified, strongly garrisoned, and held to be of considerable strategic importance by reason of its position near the mouth of the Rylle, and threatening the navigation of the lower Seine. The siege of this was entrusted to Jean de Vienne, whose success at Saint-Sauveur had stamped his reputation ; and he proceeded to reduce it by means of the same guns which at Saint-Sauveur had proved so effective ; whilst Grimaldi, with a sufficient force, guarded the approach by water. An English fleet of some 120 ships, under the Earls of Salisbury and Arundel, attempted to relieve it ; but being unable to force Grimaldi's defences at the mouth of the Rylle, wasted their energy in a vain attack on

Honfleur. Left thus to itself, Pont Audemer surrendered on 12 June; and its walls, like those of all the other captured places, were razed, so that they might not, in future years, afford shelter to the enemies of France.

Cherbourg was now the only town in Normandy remaining to the King of Navarre. In his treaty with England, he had specially reserved this to himself; but alarmed by the rapid capture of his fortresses, and threatened in Navarre itself by the *de facto* King of Castile, he resolved to pledge Cherbourg to the English, as the price of their support; and it was accordingly given over to Salisbury and Arundel on their way home, after their unsuccessful attack on Harfleur.

The news reached Jean de Vienne whilst engaged in the razing the fortifications of Pont Audemer. He sent immediately to the Spanish squadron, of probably twelve ships, then on the coast of Bretagne, to meet him off Cherbourg, whither he himself went with such force as he had with him, twenty-five of the king's ships and a number of smaller vessels leaved from the country. He found the English fleet at sea, weakened, we must suppose, by the garrison it had left at Cherbourg; but in number so superior to that of the French that it did not hesitate to attack. Though fewer, however, the French ships were superior in size, equipment and armament, and held their own with advantage until, as fortune determined it, the Spanish squadron arrived on the scene of action. This decided the day. The account is vague and confused to an extreme degree; but we are led to conclude that a general rout followed, and that the devoted courage of Sir Peter Courtenay—a son of the

Earl of Devon—in command of the rear-guard, alone saved the fleet from utter destruction; but Courtenay's ships were overwhelmed, he himself and many with him taken prisoners; and the loss in killed and drowned was very great.

This was in the early days of July; and for nearly two months the French fleet continued in command of the Channel, and keeping up an effective blockade of Cherbourg, against which the constable was advancing by land. To preserve Cherbourg to the English, a serious effort had to be made; and the Duke of Lancaster in person, having collected a large force at Southampton, sailed to its relief in the end of August. The number of ships with Lancaster is not stated; but the 12,000 soldiers, which they carried, would represent a fleet of vast numerical strength. Such as it was, Jean de Vienne felt unequal to oppose it, and retired into the Seine; and Lancaster, having thrown a sufficient garrison into Cherbourg, passed down the coast and laid siege to Saint-Malo. There the Admiral of France permitted him to stay undisturbed, whilst he, with the Spanish ships, crossing the Channel, ravaged the coast of Devon and Cornwall, the resources of which had been drained to supply the absent fleet; burnt Fowey, then a leading seaport, and returned, laden with booty. Saint-Malo had, meantime, proved able to defend itself; and when winter approached, Lancaster went back to Southampton, the only result of his great and costly expedition having been the laying open the coast of England, so that a small squadron of the enemy was able to harry it with impunity, which is thus commented on by an unknown chronicler:—‘*Sicque, sub ducatu ducis nostri,*

hic illicque percutimur, ubique vero generaliter flagellamur. Quia

Si bubo lapidi jactetur, vel lapis illi,
Ictus dampna gravis semper habebit avis.¹

The next year, 1379, opened less unfavourably. Sir Hugh Calverley had been recalled from his government of Calais to take command of the western fleet; Sir Thomas Percy was admiral of the northern; and the two together maintained the navigation of the Channel with at least equal fortune. But the year closed with a disaster equal in degree to any the fleet had ever sustained, although different in character. Sir John Arundel, the brother of the earl, had taken command of an expedition to assist the Duke of Bretagne. With him were Calverley, Percy, and a large number of knights and gentlemen. They had scarcely sailed before a violent gale sprang up, and drove them towards the coast of Ireland, on which, by the ignorance and obstinacy of Arundel, some twenty-six ships were lost with all hands, Arundel himself among the number. The name of Arundel during these years had not been of good omen to the English arms; nor indeed had it deserved to be, if we are to judge of its owner's capabilities of organising an army or of maintaining discipline, by the fact of Sir John's having sacrilegiously and violently billeted his men in a nunnery at Southampton, whilst waiting to sail on this last voyage; conduct repugnant alike to religion and humanity, and which, by the then Articles of War, was punishable by death.²

¹ *Chronicon Anglæ*, 1328-1388, Auctore Monacho quodam S. Albani (Rolls Series, No 64), p. 206.

² *Black Book of the Admiralty*, vol. i. p. 24.

The loss of this fleet seems to have, for the time, completed the ruin of the English navy. The seacoast, practically undefended, was harried, almost at will, by the Admiral of France and his active cruisers. At Kinsale, indeed, they were repulsed with some loss; but on the coast of England, from Yorkshire to Cornwall, no point was secure from their attacks; they sacked and burnt Scarborough; they sailed up the Thames and burnt Gravesend; they captured Winchelsea after a stout resistance; Hastings and Portsmouth were destroyed for a second time; and nearer home, they captured and held the islands of Jersey and Guernsey.

In England, the disgraceful conduct of the war, the insolence of the invader, the loss of property and life, the destruction of shipping, the ruin of trade, and the oppressive taxation, all combined to give rise to great excitement and irritation, which, among the better class, took the form of petition and remonstrance, and among the lower orders, culminated in popular and dangerous insurrections. These, our historians have described and discussed, without perhaps sufficiently marking the train of events which ushered them in. The special outrage which provoked John Tyler¹ at Dartford might have passed as a private injury, or at most have caused a local riot, had there not been a widespread and deep feeling of dissatisfaction and indignation. That the lower orders, more especially in the country, had many and very real grievances, social, political and religious, is not to be disputed; but the immediately exciting cause of the revolt seems to me to have been, not so much the levying of a cruelly oppressive tax, as the fact, so plainly proved to

¹ Stubbs's *Constitutional History*, ii. 456.

the most ignorant, that the money was misspent. The flames at Gravesend, in the autumn of 1380, were characters that the unlettered peasants could quite well read and understand; and which they proceeded to expound, in their own rude fashion, at Whitsuntide, 1381.¹

The exhaustion of England on the one side, the death of the King of France and the minority of his successor on the other, rendered a cessation of arms mutually acceptable, and a truce, agreed on in the spring of 1381, was nominally continued for six years, although war of a veiled or irregular character was waged through almost the whole time. Much of this was in Flanders, where the French, as supporting the Duke of Burgundy, were summoned to reduce the revolted Flemings under Philip van Artevelde, backed up by the English. In this war Jean de Vienne took a leading part, as became his post of Admiral of France; but that part was on shore, not at sea, and in the main against the Flemings; it may therefore be passed over with a bare mention. Afterwards, on the renewal of hostilities between England and Scotland, the opportunity of carrying the war into the enemy's country seemed to offer itself. This had always been his favourite idea: to expel the English from France by giving them work to do in England; to make them feel, in their own homes, the horrors of war. 'What an indignity is it,' he had urged to the king, 'to see everlastingly at our gates these English, who, after all, are but few; to nurture them in our bosom, and to provide them with weapons to use against ourselves!

¹ So considered, this revolt of the English villeins, may be faintly compared with the French Jacquerie in 1358, or the Commune in 1871.

Can we not, in our turn, go and destroy their homes, so that in their distress they may leave us masters of Guyenne, of Normandy, and of Flanders? The Saxons conquered England with but a handful of men, far from their own country; William the Bastard, with nothing but his sword. Is it to be doubted that you—with a kingdom full of men, of provisions and of money—would surely attain the desired end?’ Such arguments, when addressed to Charles V, had fallen on stony ground; when addressed to his son, Charles VI, they took root, and finally led to the admiral’s expedition to Scotland in 1385.

The story of that expedition is too well known to need relating here; but it may be necessary to remind the reader that, such as it was, it was only a small part of the plan which the admiral had devised. According to this, in fact, it was merely a feint, to draw away towards Scotland the available army of England, and leave the country, void of defenders, to be invaded without opposition. And notwithstanding the difficulties which he met with in Scotland and in his intercourse with the utterly unsympathetic Scotch, the result, so far as he was concerned, was quite commensurate with his expectations. King Richard, his court and chivalry, and an army of some 70,000 or 80,000 men, advanced northwards as far as Aberdeen; and, had the projected invasion of England been made at that time the result must have been most serious. As it was, the great fleet of nearly 600 vessels assembled at Sluys could not be got ready, and the project fell through. It was revived the next year, but without the same chances in its favour. John of Vienne had returned from Scotland, and the

treatment he had received there was not such as to encourage him to a repetition of his visit. Of the fleet, too, many ships had been lost, many had been captured whilst seeking winter quarters. It was then proposed—apparently by John of Vienne, whose genius seems to have favoured engineering works, to construct a large fortress of wood, which should be transported to England, and there erected near the landing-place, as a place of refuge for the invading army. Such a scheme did not augur well for the invasion; it seemed to savour of timidity, and, notwithstanding the invasion panic in the summer of 1386, became ridiculous in the eyes of the English when the seventy-two ships which were carrying the ‘ville de bois’ to Sluys were dispersed by a gale. Two or three of them were driven up the Thames and captured, and the pieces of the fort with which they were laden were set up as a public show in the neighbourhood of London. And so, waiting for their ‘wooden town’ and other equipments, the season passed away, and it was again proposed to put off the invasion till next year. But everyone felt that the opportunity had passed. The money was spent, the men were wearied and disgusted. The collection, too, of ships at Sluys had left the English free to recover their losses, and the cruisers from the English ports began again to be active; Dartmouth and Portsmouth had specially distinguished themselves, and private enterprise was doing more than the king and his ministers could even promise.

I see no reason to doubt that this improvement in the maritime affairs of the kingdom was due to the abolition of some of the offensive privileges granted to foreigners, and to the edict of 1381, ordering ‘that none

of the king's liege people do from henceforth ship any merchandise in going out or coming within the realm of England in any port, but only in ships of the king's liegeaunce,'¹ under penalty of forfeiture. The improvement, at any rate, is certain, and in the spring of 1387 the Earl of Arundel, appointed Admiral of the North and West, was able to get together a numerous fleet, with which he scoured the Channel, and seemed to resume the supremacy which England had of late years ceased to hold. It was in the course of this cruise that he captured nearly the whole of a mixed French and Burgundian fleet numbering 120 ships, laden with wine and other rich merchandise; a prize so great, and following so many disasters, that it has been specially spoken of as though a glorious victory. It was nothing of the sort, and, even as it was, was not entirely a success; for on the homeward voyage, a part of the fleet commanded by Sir Hugh Spenser was met on the coast of Normandy by a number of French ships, and after a stubborn fight was overpowered, taken, or destroyed. In concert with the constable, Olivier de Clisson, Jean de Vienne had determined to attempt a smaller but more united expedition against England, and for that purpose had assembled his fleet at Harfleur. It may fairly be presumed that the squadron which overwhelmed Spenser was a part of this, and was acting under instructions from the admiral.

The expedition was on the point of sailing, with the intention of landing near Dover and marching on London, when it was suddenly stopped by the news that Clisson had been taken prisoner by the Duke of Bretagne. The admiral was anxious to go on, but under

¹ 5 Richard II. stat. 1. cap. 3. *Statutes at large*, ii. 237.

the circumstances the nobles and knights refused to leave France. The army melted away, and when, after a month, Clisson was set at liberty, it was too late to begin again. But it by no means follows that even had the expedition sailed it would have arrived at Dover or the coast of England, for the English fleet was strong in numbers and in spirit; the men-at-arms were under the especial command of Sir Henry Percy, better known perhaps as Hotspur; and every day the nation was recovering confidence in itself, so much so that the next year, 1388, they kept the sea from May to November, and cruising beyond the Channel, ravaged the enemy's coast as far as Poitou. But this was about the end of the war for the time being, for in 1389 a truce was concluded, which lasted, however imperfectly, beyond the end of the century.

Of the part which Jean de Vienne took in politics or diplomacy during the closing years of his life I do not propose to speak, and the crusading adventure to Barbary in 1390, in which English and French fought side by side, may be lightly passed over. It was in 1396 that the great man, enemy though he was, whose career I have here hastily sketched, fought his last battle and died honourably at Nicopolis on 28 September. Gibbon's account of this battle is sufficiently incorrect. Neither Jean de Vienne nor the Sire de Coucy can properly be styled 'gay and thoughtless youths,' and the statement that at ten o'clock in the forenoon they were 'heated with wine' is unwarranted. The fatal charge was due solely to the youthful vivacity, impatience, and jealousy of the constable, Philippe d'Eu, who ordered his own immediate followers to advance. The two seniors hastily

consulted as to what they should do. 'Sire de Coucy,' said the admiral, 'rashness must command when truth and reason can no longer be heard, and since the Count d'Eu is determined on fighting, it becomes our duty to follow him.' It was thus that the little French army plunged into the enemy's ranks, and at their head rode Jean de Vienne, bearing on high the banner of Our Lady. 'The battle,' says Gibbon, 'would not have been lost if the French would have obeyed the prudence of the Hungarians, but it might have been gloriously won had the Hungarians imitated the valour of the French.' This, however, they did not attempt, and the French, overwhelmed by numbers, were slain to a man, Jean de Vienne amongst them, still clutching in his death grip the sacred banner which he carried.

To an Englishman, even after the lapse of 500 years it is not a pleasing task to recount the disasters of his countrymen: but we can, none the less, honour the memory of this great man, in the foremost rank of those who won back—even though from our own princes—the independence of France in the fourteenth century, and who has stamped on the pages of our naval history a bitter lesson which we should do well to lay to heart.

CHAPTER II.

*COLBERT.*THE BIRTH OF A NAVY.¹

THE reign of Louis XIV, celebrated alike for the splendour of its early, and for the gloom of its later years, will always form a favourite chapter in French history ; but whilst the brilliance of the French court, and the warlike achievements of French soldiers, or of their enemies, have been described in glowing terms by many an enthusiastic writer ; whilst the poets, who shed such grace over their own age, still live in their works as the representatives of the literary genius of their nation—we, in England at least, are too apt to ignore or slight the memory of the statesmen who, by the development which they gave to the resources of the country—by the solidity which they gave to its power—were as much the real authors of its greatness as the king, by his over-reaching ambition, was of its subsequent weakness. Of these men, first in point of time as well as of intellect, was he whose name stands at the head of this page.

Jean Baptiste Colbert, the son of parents who, whatever may have been their ancestry, certainly occupied a very humble position, was born at Rheims on 29 August,

¹ *St. Paul's Magazine*, December, 1868.

1619. He received his early training in the office of a banker in Lyons, from which, at the age of twenty-four, he was introduced into the service of Le Tellier, Secretary of State for War.¹ He rapidly acquired Le Tellier's confidence, acted as his agent in the conduct of delicate business, and was thus brought to the notice of Mazarin, who eventually, in 1651, appointed him to be his own private secretary. With Mazarin's interests he seems to have completely identified himself, and the cardinal when dying, in 1661, formally bequeathed him to the king. 'I owe you much, Sire,' he is reported to have said; 'but I partly repay you in leaving you Colbert.' The recommendation was one to which Colbert was qualified to give weight, and the malversations of Fouquet, the Superintendent of Finance, afforded him the opportunity.

Between Fouquet and Colbert there had been a friendship of long standing, but for the year before Mazarin's death the intimacy had given place to stiffness and suspicion. Whether from honest care for the public weal, or from some more personal motive, Colbert had laid before Mazarin an exposition of gross irregularities in the accounts of the revenue, and Fouquet, not unnaturally, believed that in doing so Colbert was actuated by a desire to oust him from an office which he coveted for himself. Mazarin, however, was unwilling to stir in the matter, and for the time it was allowed to drop. Colbert now revived it. He laid before the king such a clear account of the malpractices of the Superintendent of Finance that his disgrace followed within a few days.

¹ *Lettres, Instructions et Memoires de Colbert, publiés d'après les ordres de l'Empereur. . . . par Pierre Clément.* 8 vols. royal 8vo. 1861-1882.

The process which ruined Fouquet was the foundation-stone of Colbert's fortune ; for the king resolved to be his own minister, and struck with the ability which Colbert had displayed in preparing the charges, appointed him to the vacant office as Controller of Finance. The man's tact, acquired in long training in subordinate positions, and his aptitude for business, very shortly won him the entire favour of the king, and during the ten years which followed his first appointment, although nominally holding only particular offices, he was, in reality, all but absolute throughout the kingdom.

The time, however, was one of extreme difficulty, and it was only by slow degrees that he was able to enter on any great policy. His work at the beginning was necessarily for the most part work of reform. His attention was fully occupied with the struggle against the internal confusion of the country, which had been brought to the verge of bankruptcy by the unprincipled and licentious administration of his predecessor, and which was now scourged by a famine of almost unexampled severity, caused in a great measure by the failure of the harvest of 1661, but fearfully aggravated by a clause in the corn laws passed the same year, which distinctly forbade the formation of any company for the sale of grain, or the accumulation of grain in any magazines. There was thus no store in the country to meet the emergency. Out of Josephus we know of nothing so terrible as the description of the state of the French peasantry during that spring of 1662. To say that they died in crowds conveys no idea of their sufferings. They were found dead in the fields, their mouths full of the grass with which they had vainly tried to stay the cravings of

hunger. They were found dead in the church-porches, their own hands and arms half-devoured; dead in the houses, destitute of all furniture and clothes; dead in the gutters, where they had been grovelling for carrion and garbage. And many that lived were known to have sustained life on food of a nature so loathsome that at the very thought of it the blood runs cold with horror.

Immediate and energetic measures on the part of the government were necessary to relieve this fearful destitution. Corn was bought up in foreign countries, and from the stores thus acquired, and from Paris, sufficient was thrown into the provinces to bring the price down to a moderate level. At the same time large grants of money were made, and reiterated appeals to private charity called forth supplies which served to relieve the most pressing wants.

But the disorder which existed amongst the finances of the country, though not so lethal as the famine, was almost as important a consideration. It is difficult to conceive anything worse than the state into which the revenue had fallen. This was not only from the neglect of crown property, but from the alienation of some of the principal taxes; the misappropriation of others; the wasteful expenditure of past years; the fraud, peculation, and gross misconduct of the collectors, not in isolated cases, but all over the country. The people were ground down by a heavy, almost intolerable taxation; and the public chest contained little or no money. To remedy this, to restore order where there seemed nothing but impending ruin—work compared to which the cleansing of the Augean stable might be considered

the amusement of a summer afternoon—was the task that Colbert was called upon to perform.

The state of the government securities was the first point that demanded his attention ; they were in need of a drastic treatment, and they got it. The direct taxes of Paris were almost swallowed up by charges secured on irregular or illegal bonds. These were cancelled, notwithstanding the excitement which such a step caused amongst the many who had bought the stock in good faith. Other loans which had been legally secured at a high rate of interest, were paid off with money borrowed on more equitable terms, thus effecting an annual saving of eight millions of francs. Others, again, were bought in, the holders being obliged to sell at the low price for which they had purchased the stock, during a period of excessive depreciation. Very large sums were further raised by the Chamber of Justice, which compelled the financial agents of the former administration to disgorge a considerable portion of their ill-gotten wealth. This court, appointed by the king specially to examine into and adjudicate on the numerous charges brought against these men, whilst sentencing many to corporal punishment or death, imposed on most of them fines which ran in some individual instances as high as six millions, and amounted in the aggregate to upwards of 110 millions of francs. When such sums could be recovered, after several years of the unbounded extravagance and splendour which rendered the name of financier almost proverbial, we can form some estimate of the enormity of the frauds which had been eating into the life of the country.

The same cankerworm existed in every department

of the public service. Careless and corrupt administration, winking at or directly allowing rights illegally usurped, had reduced the revenue derived from the royal forests to 150,000 francs. Ten years later it averaged upwards of a million. The pernicious practice of selling at a high price almost every office under government had in itself given rise to incalculable evil; and as the salaries had been irregularly or seldom paid, those purchasers who had the power naturally enough indemnified themselves for the loss. Patents of nobility, which carried with them exemptions from many government claims, had been lavishly granted during past years, and the system of raising supplies by the sale of such patents was openly recognised. It had thus come to pass that the large body of the rich, on whom the payment of taxes would have fallen but lightly, paid nothing; and that the money for the necessities of the government had to be wrung out of the earnings of the poor. Against this injustice a decisive blow was struck by the edict of 1665, which revoked all letters of nobility granted since 1634. At the same time several persons were convicted of having usurped the privileges of nobility without any authority whatever. These were now punished and made liable to pay in the future. The burden of the people was thus considerably relieved. But the clamour against Colbert was very loud. Those who were exposed, fined, and taxed, were men of wealth and position, and their indignation was very great. This sought a vent, not in a defence of their own inexcusable conduct, of which they avoided all mention, but in a cry that Colbert was undermining the constitution of the country, lowering the royal prerogative, and putting the

gentlemen on the same footing as the peasants. Colbert, however, was too firmly seated in office to be influenced or disturbed by the complaints of these would-be aristocrats; he was upheld by the king, and carried on the work of reform with energetic determination and unsparing severity. Highway robbery was put down, rioters punished, public peace insisted on; internal traffic was encouraged; local dues, so far as feelings of provincial pride permitted, were equalised, and under the rule of a government at once able and strong, the country began quickly to emerge from the abyss of barbarism, into which the last hundred years of anarchy, sedition or rebellion, persecution, oppression, and civil war had thrown it.

Integrity, economy, and order were, however, but tributaries to the principal stream by which wealth was to be poured into the country. Colbert was the son of a shopkeeper, educated in early youth with a view to a mercantile life; and the bias which his mind thus received affected his whole policy, and led him to consider that the true prosperity of the nation was to be sought in manufactures and commerce. On this principle he determined that the capabilities of the kingdom should be developed; and he carried the determination through with an ardour that neither failure could chill, nor the fear of responsibility check. The labour which he devoted to each separate branch of industry was excessive. As soon as a trade was introduced, or resolved on, it received his fostering care, nor did he withdraw his attention as long as it showed a spark of vitality. It was thus that France became celebrated for her manufactures of lace, ribbon, and silk; but the means by

which he established and nurtured them were of a most absolute, often of an illegal nature. When he learned that the ribbon-makers of Chevreuse were in the habit of wasting their time in dissipation, he promulgated an order forbidding the publichouse-keepers of the town to sell them anything either to eat or drink during working hours. When he heard of a workman at Lyons who had found out some improvement in cloth-printing, and was on the point of taking it to Florence, he had him imprisoned, in order to prevent his leaving the country. And many similar instances might be given; for one of the distinguishing features in Colbert's character was a fixedness of purpose that, when he had once made up his mind as to what ought to be done, went straight at the end proposed with a determination to bear down all obstacles. And his ideas were for the most part conformable to the period in which he lived; more enlarged and clearer than those of ordinary men, but still subject to the influences of the age, which centuries of tyranny and misrule had prevented from receiving the more persuasive maxims of civilisation. Violent and extreme, often illegal, punishments thus seemed to him the best, as they were the quickest, means of attaining his end; and the men who were subjected to them, accustomed to the oppression of the great and to the disorders of rebellion and revolt, saw nothing strange in his arbitrary method of carrying on the government. These influences, acting on his industrial policy, caused him to believe that a large and powerful country like France ought to be almost entirely self-supporting; that its manufactures, its agriculture, its commerce ought to be sufficient to provide for all the wants of both necessity and luxury,

and that strict protection and constant government surveillance were the best means of making them so. 'It was contrary to the spirit of the age, ignorant alike of the theory and practice of commerce, to suppose that the wealth and prosperity of adjoining nations were really sources from which wealth and prosperity ought to flow towards his own country, and with the whole weight of his influence and power he endeavoured to make France independent of any import trade with the rest of Europe. It was thus that he devised the exorbitant tariff of 1667, which, doubling, and in some cases tripling the previously existing duties, amounted to a partial or even total prohibition of both export and import. The manufactures of the country, in their young and undeveloped state, doubtless reaped a very decided advantage from this prohibition. They could not produce enough to feel the clog of the export duties, whilst those on imports gave them a sufficient sale within the country. But agriculture suffered terribly; for as corn could not be exported at all except by permission from government, and as this permission could never be depended on, the farmers simplified their cares by not growing more than would satisfy the demands of their own neighbourhood. Thus the good land only was cultivated, the inferior was neglected; and on any failure, or partial failure, of the harvest, there was an immediate famine; for as each province only sowed what would be enough for its own consumption, when dearth occurred in one the others had no excess out of which to relieve the want. Very great suffering was therefore common; a scarcity of bread—not merely a certain rise in price, but an absolute scarcity—occurring about once in every three

years ; and on each occasion of this distress a fresh attempt was made to prevent it in future by making still stricter the laws against the export of grain.

And yet, whilst clogging with exorbitant duties the commerce that was within his reach, he was still most anxious to grasp at that which was beyond it. He looked with great bitterness of feeling on the enormous revenues which the Dutch drew from their East and West India trade, from their trade in the Levant and the Baltic, and from their Northern fisheries, whether of whale or herring. He could not help seeing that it was this widespread commerce which gave the Dutch an influence and power in Europe wholly disproportionate to the size of their country and the number of their population ; nor could he avoid picturing to himself the magnificent future in store for France when her commerce had taken the place of that of Holland. To this end his labours were directed ; and as companies, protected and assisted by the government, were still believed to offer the best and surest way of developing a new commerce, such companies were formed with special privileges to trade, whether north, south, west, or east. There was the Company of the North, designed to divert the Baltic trade and the fisheries to France ; the Company of the Pyrenees, which was to bring timber, pitch, and tar from the mountain-slopes to the sea-ports where they could be made available ; there was the African Company to trade in negroes, palm-oil, ivory, and gold-dust ; the West Indian Company, to share in the valuable commerce of the Antilles and the Spanish Main ;—above all, there was the East India Company, which, it was fondly hoped, would draw to France the produce that had successively enriched Venice, Portugal,

and Holland. Three attempts to establish an East India Company had already failed, when, in 1664, Colbert took the matter in hand, resolved to succeed if trouble and expense could enable him to do so. But the previous failures had made the commercial public look coldly on the scheme, and much argument and persuasion were necessary to induce them to come forward with their subscriptions. The mayors of the different towns were invited to give both their money and influence; the government officials were permitted to understand that their personal interest might be forwarded by a liberal contribution, the king himself subscribed three millions out of the fifteen with which the company was started, and it was agreed that these three millions should not bear interest for the first ten years, and that any losses the company might sustain should be chargeable on them. The company was further gifted with numerous privileges, exemptions from duties and tolls, and the rights of sovereignty over the countries which it might acquire from the natives, or conquer from the enemy. It was thus fairly started in 1664; but neither protection, nor privileges, nor the assistance of the government could support it against the unfortunate selection of the superior officers, and the apparent incapacity of the French people for colonisation. During the first eleven years of its existence there was an actual loss of six millions and a half; and though it lingered on for upwards of a century, it never enjoyed more than the most transient gleams of prosperity.

The fate of the other companies was still more decisive. The Company of the West Indies became bankrupt for three and a half millions within ten years; the

Company of the North collapsed on the breaking out of the war with Holland in 1672; and that of the Pyrenees ceased to exist about the same time.

The bad success which attended all these companies was far from making Colbert view with equanimity the continued stream of commerce which poured its riches into the lap of Holland. It was this probably that caused him to adhere so firmly to the toll of fifty sous per ton levied on all foreign ships arriving in French ports—a toll which pressed heavily on foreign merchants, more particularly on the Dutch, and stirred up much ill-feeling without producing to the revenue any direct advantage worth speaking of, for it does not seem in any year to have amounted to half a million of francs. But the toll did undoubtedly at the time give a great stimulus to the native ship-owners; and though the Dutch remonstrated against it, still, as they could only appeal to the faith of ancient treaties, whilst Colbert was supported in his resolve by the manifest advantage which it must bring to French shipping, their remonstrance was unavailing. The toll was continued, rankling in the minds of the Dutch, whose material interests were again still more severely injured by the tariff of 1667. This tariff pressed heavily on the industries and commerce of both England and Holland, and gave rise, in both countries, to the most serious discontent. It did not, however, suit the purpose of the English king to break with the crown that paid his pension; and the English people, with no goodwill, were forced to submit to the new duties and the loss which they imposed on them. With the Dutch it was different. Their government did not hesitate to express its dissatisfaction in very plain terms; and Col-

bert, backed by the army of France, was by no means anxious to allay the angry feeling. War, if war should arise, was as likely a way as any other to lessen the power and drain the resources of Holland. The grasping ambition of the king seconded his views. After years of tedious and querulous correspondence, war broke out in 1672; and in a few months Holland, overrun by the French troops, with its strong places in the hands of the enemy, seemed on the brink of destruction. It was then (8 July, 1672) that Colbert, hoping to accomplish his long wished-for purpose, endeavoured to persuade the king to adopt a series of measures which, if acted on, would have annihilated the Dutch trade. His proposals, which amounted to a demand for the cession of all their East and West Indian settlements, and of their right of trade in the Mediterranean, were, however, rejected by the king as too moderate to be offered to a country already completely subjugated. The result was—as is well known—a continuance of the war, in which the frenzy of despair lent an unexpected vigour to the Dutch arms. The De Witts were massacred in a fit of popular fury; and the Prince of Orange, raised to the head of affairs, so ably conducted them in the cabinet at home and in the field abroad, that France lost her advantage almost as quickly as she had gained it. For six years this bitter war continued, and ended at last in the treaty of Nimeguen, by which France—though gaining from Germany and Spain some increase of her territory—lost all the commercial advantages to the pursuit of which Colbert had devoted his ministry and his life. The tariff of 1667, one of the original causes of the war, was given up; the special privileges and excessive duties by which

he had sought to establish certain branches of commerce and manufacture were abolished, and it was agreed that reciprocal liberty of trade between the two countries should not be prohibited, limited, or restrained.

In the conduct of this war on shore, Colbert, however, had no part beyond providing the money which it devoured. At sea it was different. He had been actually the head of the naval department since 1669, and virtually so since 1665. It is in this capacity that his career offers the greatest interest to us, as Englishmen; and doubly so when we find that, owing to his energetic measures, France, a few years before entirely destitute of any naval force, was able to send the Count d'Estrées with a fleet of forty sail to witness the battle of Solebay in May, 1672; and the Duke de Vivonne with upwards of fifty ships to conduct the campaign of Sicily in 1676. It is this sudden rise of the French navy, this extraordinary development of the French maritime power—which has been, with pardonable pride, compared to the springing forth of Minerva from the head of Jupiter, armed and ready for the combat—that must ever be considered as the crowning point of Colbert's fame.

Richelieu had indeed attempted to form a navy which might be not quite unworthy of a great nation; and succeeded in getting together a force respectable both in numbers and efficiency; but the troubles of the Fronde with its accompanying civil wars quickly undid the work of the great cardinal, and the neglect of Mazarin completed the destruction. A fleet cannot be kept up without a large and continuous outlay of money, and the disordered state of the finances during Mazarin's ministry did not admit of the requisite funds being supplied.

Whilst Mazarin himself was appropriating fifty millions out of the public money; whilst Fouquet and the subordinate financiers were revelling in a display of luxury and wealth which has seldom been approached, the sum annually spent on the equipment of the king's ships fell from the five millions, which Richelieu had considered necessary in 1647, to three hundred thousand francs, which was all that Mazarin and his gang of attendant harpies could allow. We cannot then feel surprised that in 1662, Colbert found that the state possessed no more than two or three ships of war in a seaworthy condition, and that of the twenty galleys left by Richelieu, six only, miserably inefficient, remained; the rest had rotted on their slips, or sunk in the harbour of Toulon. With the new ministry a new order of things was installed. Resolved that the state should have a naval force both numerous and efficient, Colbert commenced the work of reformation at once. In 1662 he caused three millions to be allotted for that purpose; in succeeding years this sum was doubled and trebled, and in 1671—in ten years, that is, from the time of his taking office—he had raised this part of his budget to thirteen millions. That the government was in a position to afford this large sum was due entirely to the financial and administrative reforms which Colbert had introduced. That it did afford it was as entirely due to the influence of Colbert as head of the navy. Nor under the direction of such a man was it possible for the money to be misapplied; every expense was strictly inquired into; the most severe economy was everywhere enjoined; and however the public treasure might be squandered in lavish profusion in other departments which were beyond

Colbert's control, there is little doubt that in this, at least, France got very good value for her money.

Large quantities of stores were purchased in Sweden; many ships, ready for sea, were bought from Holland, then a friendly State, and many others were ordered to be built. But Colbert was keenly alive to the necessity of being independent of any foreign government. The Dutch willingly lent him skilled workmen, whom he brought from Holland to teach their trade to the raw hands that he had to employ; and they taught it them well, so that in a few years the French shipbuilders became celebrated both for the rapidity and excellence of their work; and down to the wars of the Revolution, French ships were considered as models of men-of-war.

Quickness in the building of a ship was a point on which Colbert laid great stress. Experience has shown that this was a mistake; that the timbers, as they are fixed in their places, require time to settle and become firmly knit together. This was probably not known two hundred years ago, or it would be difficult to explain the importance which Colbert—who had a wonderful theoretical knowledge of even the details and technicalities of the profession—attached to lessening the time in which a ship could be built and equipped. In this, as will generally be the case with anything to which an earnest attention is paid, the success was almost incredible. Towards the latter part of his administration a ship could be laid down, built, launched, rigged, and got ready for sea in half a day. Wonderful as this statement is, it rests on indisputable evidence. In July, 1679, a forty-gun frigate was actually built at Toulon in seven hours; and about the same date, a galley

carried the Marquis de Seignelay and a large official party from Marseilles to the Château d'If, within ten hours and a half from the time that the shipwrights commenced to build her. These, of course, were very exceptional cases; but they show what the ideal standard of perfection was—a standard to which the different controllers and superintendents were constantly urged to approach as near as possible, on ordinary occasions. When the head of the department showed himself always energetic and watchful, when he was also at the head of the finances of the kingdom, and could push forward his projects with all the resources that money could buy, we need not wonder at the results obtained. By the official list of 1 January, 1677, the last year of the war with Holland, the State possessed, exclusively of galleys, 199 ships of war of all sizes, actually afloat. Of these sixty-eight were first, second, and third-rates, that is, ships of not less than fifty guns, or 800 tons burden, and several of them were much larger, as, for instance, the *Soleil Royal* and the *Royal Louis*, each of 2,400 tons burden and 120 guns.

To man the ships when built was a point of no less importance than the mere building. In former ages, the plan of manning a fleet, when one was got together, was extremely simple. The ports throughout the kingdom were closed, and a press-gang laid violent hands on every available man, who was forthwith sent on board. The pressed men were by a legal fiction supposed to be seamen; but knowing as we do the traditions of the press in our own country fifty years ago, we can have little difficulty in understanding that in France more than two hundred years since, an able-bodied man,

whatever might be his trade, would find it far from easy to persuade his captors that he was not a seaman; and that, seaman or not, when once pressed, he had to serve. This system Colbert attempted to abolish. He did, in fact, abolish it in name, and substituted a strict enrolment of sailors in all the provinces of the seaboard. The maritime population was thus divided into three classes, one of which was called out for service every year. Of this year they actually served six months, and if no longer wanted, received half-pay for the other six. In the two years which intervened before their turn came round again, they were free to serve in merchant ships, or employ themselves as they liked. The system, however, did not fully answer the expectations which the minister had formed; the men were suspicious, and evaded the enrolment; a promise half-made, that those who were enrolled should be exempt from taxation, was never fulfilled; the half-pay, though distinctly agreed on, could not be paid when the war which began in 1672 was calling for all the money the kingdom could raise; but above all, the new system, by doing away with many opportunities for jobbing, militated so directly against the personal interests of several officers in high position, that it became to a great extent a dead letter. And the necessities of the state itself practically abrogated the law; for whenever war broke out, the class of the year was insufficient, so that all the classes were called on, in addition to which the ports were closed, and the press again instituted. The men thus found themselves in a worse position than ever. Obligated as they were by the law to serve when it was their turn, and seized on by the press when it was not, it is not to

be wondered at that they had recourse to all possible subterfuges and evasions to escape the enrolment. The fleets, however, were manned, and in the course of time many out of the different crews doubtless became more reconciled to the service, and settled down into regular men-of-war's men. These formed a future nucleus; and the system of enrolment by classes, modified considerably according to the requirements of the state, or as experience suggested improvements, remained in force for a full century after Colbert's death, and may fairly be considered as the basis of the system which exists at the present day.

As supplemental to the sailors of the fleet, of whom he was unable to find a sufficient number, Colbert formed in 1669 two regiments of infantry, of 3,000 men each, to serve in detachments on board the ships, in a manner precisely similar to our own marines. These, there can be little doubt, would have been a valuable adjunct to the crews, had not the jealousy of Louvois, who insisted on having the appointment of the officers, rendered the plan abortive. The officers so appointed, receiving their commissions from, and dependent for promotion on, the Secretary of State for War, had little care to win the good opinion of the Secretary for the Navy, or of the naval officers under whom they served. Being put on the same footing, with regard to pay and promotion, as the officers of the line regiments, instead of enjoying the peculiar advantages and privileges which Colbert had offered in the first instance, they conceived a distaste for the service afloat, which enhanced their insubordinate disposition, and led to such constant difficulties and quarrels, that in 1671, only two years after

they were raised, they were turned over to the regular army, and soldiers for the service afloat were entered as each ship was put in commission.

The difficulty of finding officers for the ships was scarcely less than that of finding men. A few there were, indeed, who had served in the time of Richelieu, or had since learnt the profession on board the Maltese cruisers. These, however, were far from sufficient in number, so that officers of the army were transferred, in a wholesale manner, to the sister service, and gradually attained a certain amount of nautical skill under the instruction of the merchant skippers who were, at the time, the real sailing-masters of the ships. But it was far from Colbert's idea that this state of things should continue. He resolved that the officers of the several ships should be such in reality as well as in name; and being convinced of the advantage of early training, he instituted a body of cadets which remained in existence till the Revolution. These cadets, under the title of 'Gardees de la Marine,' were all gentlemen by birth, and served on board as volunteers until they received their promotion to the rank of ensign. They were, in fact, on very much the same footing as midshipmen in our own navy, and performed the same duties, but their advancement as a rule was speedy, for the necessities of the country required officers. These, as they grew up to be men, having been carefully instructed in their profession, theoretically and practically, formed a very valuable class; though the pride of birth, in many instances, led them into difficulties with others who, by long or daring service, had won their promotion from an inferior rank of life. For of these there was a consider-

able number—a number, too, which increased rapidly when war, putting a check on the rising commerce, converted the bold skipper of many a fishing or coasting boat into a dashing privateer, and in time into the commander of his majesty's ships and squadrons. Such men were, in the succeeding age, Jean Bart and Du Guay-Trouin, whose exploits, although for the most part performed with but small force, read more like the romantic tales of the Knights of the Round Table, than the sober history of the seventeenth or eighteenth century. The almost equally celebrated colleague of these, De Forbin, was, on the other hand, a cadet of the aristocratic guards, and served as such in the expedition to Messina in 1675. De Langeron also was a cadet a few years senior, and having stepped over the intermediate grades, served as a captain in the same expedition. Tourville, who commanded the French fleets in the battles of Beachy Head and La Hogue, commenced his career on board a Maltese galley, and quitting the active service of the order in a fit of pique, won at an early age considerable renown by a series of enterprises in the Levant, which were then counted as honourable, but which in a time of stricter morality would have conducted him to the gallows. It was not till 1667 that he entered the service of the French king. Château-Renault also was a knight of St. John. Du Quesne, whose conduct on the coast of Sicily rendered his name dear to France, a skilful officer, but of a most perverse and quarrelsome disposition, was one of the old school, his commission as captain dating back as far as 1626. Count d'Estrées, who for some years held the chief command over the French fleets of the West, was a

landsman until his appointment as Vice-Admiral of France in 1669; as also was the Marquis de Villette till he was forty years old. These are some of the men who occupied a distinguished position in the navy of Louis XIV, and it is not a little interesting to notice the different points from which they started. A similar diversity was then general throughout all ranks. But as the navy became more and more a settled institution, as the ships' companies were more regularly raised by enrolment, the officers were also more commonly, and latterly almost entirely, entered as cadets of the guard and trained to the discipline of the service from their youth.¹ Officers not gentlemen by birth were rare during the second half of the eighteenth century; and it was this exclusiveness which, on the breaking out of the Revolution, turned the popular rage against them in a manner so fatal both to themselves and to the French navy.

In the time of which we are speaking, however, when there were no precedents to guide their conduct, when passions were more unrestrained, when public morality was a thing little understood, there was considerable difficulty in binding the different elements together so that they might act in unison. The executive officers were inclined to treat the civil officers with disdain; the sailors looked down on the landsmen; the aristocratic cadets scorned the company of their more humbly-de-

¹ D'Estaing, whose career, ashore or afloat, does not reflect much honour on either his name or his country, was one of the very few who, in the end of last century, held high naval command without having worked their way through the subordinate grades. He was thrust into the navy, with the rank of lieutenant-general, in 1768.

scended messmates; quarrels were never-ending; duels were frequent; insubordination was by no means rare; the captains, and even the admirals, set but a bad example to the lieutenants and ensigns; the enmity between D'Estrées and Du Quesne was notorious, and although the latter was palpably in the wrong, though his conduct as an inferior officer towards his superior was contrary to all the rules of military service, still the need which the kingdom had of officers possessing ability and experience was so great, that Colbert could do nothing more than persuade, entreat, or threaten. With the juniors he took a more decided tone. In their cases, threats were generally followed by punishment which might in some instances be counted unduly harsh, did we lose sight of the extreme danger which the navy ran of being utterly disorganised by the existing unruly spirit.

The dishonesty of the commissaries presented another serious difficulty. Embezzlement of money and fraudulently making away with stores¹ were crimes painfully common; and the temptation to the captains, who acted also as the pursers of their ships, to enrich themselves by serving out provisions in short allowance and of inferior quality was not often resisted. These were taxes on the energy of the minister against which few besides Colbert could have made adequate resistance; but his iron will sustained him, and he did in the course of time succeed in getting together a body of officers, who could, under heavy pressure, live together without

¹ These were vices of the age, not peculiar to France or the French navy, but much too frequently manifested on board our own ships, or in high places on shore.

brawling, and, under constant surveillance, could take charge of stores without stealing; but whilst these were being selected, the number of those who were dismissed, disgraced, or imprisoned was very large.

The mere numerical strength to which the exertions of Colbert raised the French navy was alone sufficient to give it prestige in the eyes of Europe. It was not till the year 1676 that it had any opportunity of endeavouring to win that prestige by force of arms. The skill of the officers and crews must, however, have been still far below the standard to which natural aptitude and long experience had raised the Dutch, especially while under the command of an admiral like De Ruyter. In the battle of Alicudi, on 8 January, notwithstanding their superiority in number, size, and in the equipment of their ships, which were fresh from Toulon with complete crews—notwithstanding their superiority in number and weight of guns, the French were not able to gain even the semblance of an advantage over their hardy enemy. On 22 April, off Agosta, De Ruyter, with ten ships—separated from the rest of his fleet by a division of the most incapable of allies—held at bay and virtually beat back the whole French fleet, a splendid achievement, dearly paid for by the wound which proved mortal after seven days. And whatever we may think of the arrogance or imbecility of the Spanish government, or of the weakness of the Spanish navy, it is still evident that the careful administration of Colbert, whilst able to build and equip ships in a manner equal to those of any country in Europe, was not able to improvise, in a similar way, a race of men who could be compared with the sailors of Holland.

The detailed accounts of these battles were, however, by no means generally known through the kingdom of France. The government of Louis XIV was perfectly well skilled in the art of spreading favourable news; and Colbert in particular held it as a point of duty to speak highly of the achievements of the navy. In 1672, after the battle of Solebay, he had repeatedly expressed his indignation at the modest way in which the Count D'Estrées had spoken of the French share in the action, and had given positive orders that all reports meant for the public eye should be made as favourable as possible. If this was the case after the battle of Solebay, when whatever accounts tended to the glory of the French navy must have contained a very large proportion of fiction, it was much more so in 1676, when two actions had been fought, against De Ruyter, without defeat; and when—at Palermo, on 2 June—one very decided success had been gained. This, indeed, was so complete a victory that the French minister had very solid grounds for congratulating the navy and the country on the splendid achievement. The other two battles got mixed up with it, in the popular mind; and the general impression throughout the kingdom was that the fleet under Du Quesne had completely defeated the Dutch with De Ruyter at their head. The death of De Ruyter lent a colour to this view; and the imagined victory over De Ruyter has been spoken of in glowing language by writers whose researches into the history of the time ought to have cleared away all confusion.

The three battles, however, deservedly won a marquisate for Du Quesne; the veteran's grumblings were forgotten in the splendour of his victory; and even

Colbert, laying aside his usual coldness, wrote to express his joy and satisfaction at the result of the campaign. We can indeed easily understand that his satisfaction must have been very great. The successes on the coast of Sicily were the proof to the public of the success of his endeavour to form a navy—the proof to himself, perhaps, that his navy was capable of real service, and not merely one that might look well in the roadstead, or appear formidable on paper. To us, acquainted with the difficulties against which he had to contend, the figures which represent its strength are a conclusive proof of the talent and energy which he had employed. We have already given the number of ships of all classes actually afloat during the last year of the Dutch war as 199. To officer these, there were, on the official list, 86 captains, 116 lieutenants, and 136 ensigns; admirals, commanders of different grades, and officers holding exceptional posts, brought the number up to 416. After the peace the numerical strength of the navy was not much increased during Colbert's life, though his zeal for its efficiency does not seem to have suffered any diminution; and on his death in 1683, his son, the Marquis de Seignelay, succeeded to the administration of a force which, in respect to equipment and organisation, was far superior to that maintained by any other power in the world.

If it were on the foundation of this alone that the claims of Colbert's memory to the gratitude of France were based, he would even then be deservedly celebrated as one of the most distinguished of her sons. When to that, the principal and grandest labour of his life, we join the consideration of the numerous other tasks which

he accomplished, of the permanent advantages which accrued from his ministry; when we consider the enormous stimulus which he gave to manufactures and commerce; the way in which he opened out the internal resources of the kingdom by the construction of roads and canals, and in an especial degree by the construction of the canal of Languedoc, which had been the dream of so many former reigns, we are driven to the conclusion that not only in France but in the civilised world, he takes a high place among those who have worked for the benefit of their country.

And yet he died hated by the people, and all but disgraced by the king. There is reason to believe that jealousy of Louvois and chagrin at the coldness of the king aggravated and rendered fatal an illness which was brought on, in the first instance, by the severe toil to which he had subjected himself, without necessary repose. This toil was indeed excessive. During many years he worked in his office regularly for sixteen hours a day, and the results testify that the time was not lightly employed. It was not the mere force of genius which enabled him to accomplish such mighty tasks. The labour which they cost him is manifest on every page of his voluminous writings; and whilst our opinion of his natural gifts is at the highest, we cannot but acknowledge that the gift which, of all others, conduced the most to his success, was his wonderful industry and determination.

In his comparative loss of the favour of the vain and versatile king, there is perhaps nothing strange, but we might be surprised at the bad odour in which his name was held by the people. This may in part be attributed

to the stern and cold manner which was natural to him, and caused him to be spoken of as the 'man of marble.' Many anecdotes are told of him which well illustrate his claim to the title; amongst others, this: Madame Cornuel, who was celebrated in society for her wit and lively disposition, had one day attempted to persuade him to grant her some favour. Colbert listened to all she had to say without making any answer, till at last, piqued by his silence, the lady exclaimed, '*Monseigneur, faites moi au moins signe que vous m'entendez.*' In part also it may be attributed to the bold and unsparing way in which he trampled on private interests, or suppressed class privileges. I have spoken already of the hostile feeling he excited by his arbitrary manipulation of the funds, and by doing away with special exemptions from taxation; but other instances were not unfrequent where he had steadily pursued what he conceived to be the path of duty, without too much regard to the prejudices of those for whom he legislated. The enemies whom he thus stirred up were men for the most part of good position or of provincial authority; and of the dirt which they so freely flung on his reputation, some doubtless adhered.

But, above all, it was notorious that, being a man of humble origin, he had provided splendidly for all his relations, and had amassed a very large fortune. It is impossible to think that the ten millions to which this amounted were not acquired in a strictly legal manner, more especially as he made no secret of the amount; but the people could not help looking with suspicion on a minister who, during twenty-two years of great financial distress—for the Dutch war pressed heavily on the

taxpayer—had managed, with but a small nominal salary, to accumulate such a sum. The libels and savage epigrams which appeared after his death, when the terror inspired by his resolute conduct no longer restrained the scribblers of the day, were almost countless. Gross and frantic as most of them are, they still, with scarcely an exception, cling to his dishonesty as the assailable point in his character. The following verse of one of them embodies the general spirit, with a certain sparkle of wit to relieve the uncommonly plain-speaking which runs through the rest of the ode:—

Enfin Colbert n'est plus, et c'est vous faire entendre
Que la France est réduite au plus bas de son sort ;
Car s'il restoit encore quelque chose à lui prendre,
Le voleur ne seroit pas mort.

We do not, as we have said, attach much importance to these charges. It is scarcely credible that a man of Colbert's acumen would have laid himself open to such, from a legal point of view; but the ten millions remain, a fatal proof that, whatever the law might think of his conduct, he could not say, on his death-bed, with our English admiral, Sir George Rooke, 'I do not leave much, but what I leave was honestly gotten. It never cost a sailor a tear, or the nation a farthing.'

CHAPTER III.

DU QUESNE.

THE FRENCH NAVY IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.¹

THE origin and early organisation of the navies of France and England have been so different, that a student of naval history has his attention naturally turned to the consideration of them, in his endeavours to understand the permanent differences between the two services—differences which have especially shown themselves in the relative standard of practical skill and of theoretical knowledge. With us, the navy in earlier ages was simply the militia of our sea-coasts, a force composed of ships which on ordinary occasions were traders or pirates, and, when need was, assembled from their several ports, subject to the orders of the king or his admirals: this, as it gradually developed into a government institution, long retained the essentially popular character of its origin, possessing a remarkable degree of elasticity in time of rare defeat or more frequent maladministration. With the French it was on a very different footing; it rested entirely on the whim or ambition of the government, and its strength ebbed or

¹ *Fraser's Magazine*, November, 1874.

flowed according to the imbecility or vigour of the administration. It was not till after many and extreme fluctuations that, towards the end of the seventeenth century, it settled into something like its present form.

Of this period of change and development, I have already spoken in the last chapter. But the importance of the subject seems to warrant my recurring to it in connection with the life of the Marquis Du Quesne¹ whose career occupies a prominent position in the early history of the existing French navy. A captain under Richelieu and Mazarin, when captains were few; an admiral under Colbert, when ships were many, Du Quesne was for more than fifty years mixed up with every naval event of any importance. One of the few seamen whom France could then boast amongst her officers, the embodiment and mouthpiece of naval tradition, of 'the manners and customs used at sea,' conservative to an extreme, yet withal intensely anti-aristocratic, the story of his life does in reality possess a singular interest, whether we consider it from a personal or from a scientific point of view.

Abraham Du Quesne was born at Dieppe in 1610. His father, a shipmaster and shipowner in a small way, was a self-made man, the son of a Huguenot tailor at

¹ *Abraham Du Quesne et la Marine de son Temps*, par A. Jal, Ancien Historiographe et Archiviste de la Marine. Paris: 1873. Other important works, bearing on the naval history of the time are:—*Lettres éc. de Colbert* (Clément), see ante, p. 31; *Mémoires du Marquis de Villette* (Monmerqué), *Lettres éc. de Vvonne, et de Valbelle* (as quoted in *Histoire de la Marine*, par Sue); *La Vie de Michel de Ruyter*, par Gerard Brandt; *Annales des Provinces Unies*, par Basnage. There is a portrait of Duquesne at Greenwich, in the Painted Hall, to which it was presented by Louis-Philippe; but its genuineness is, nevertheless, rather doubtful.

Blangy, whose connection with one or other of the noble Norman families of the same name must be regarded as altogether apocryphal. Of his boyhood we have absolutely no information; and though he, in some way, learned to read and write fairly, he was probably occupied, from a very early age, on board the small coasters which his father commanded. In 1627 he was serving as his father's chief officer, in a small privateer of 70 tons; and, from the evidence given at a trial regarding one of their prizes, it appears that both father and son held commissions as 'captains in the service of the king.' That his commission, dated in 1626, gave him seniority as a captain, is a point on which Du Quesne insisted throughout his whole career; but as given to a boy of sixteen, who could, in fact, be nothing more than his father's apprentice, and who does not seem to have ever served in a king's ship, it can only be considered as a species of enrolment, about which we have no certain information. The father's commission dated from 1625, but neither father nor son appears to have had, at that time, any further connection with the public service; on the contrary, we find the father in 1628 still cruising on his own account, and combining something like piracy with his legitimate trade. Being at St. Malo, he fell in with the skippers of two barques bound for Rouen, and having struck up a sort of intimacy, undertook to convoy them as far as the mouth of the Seine. When they arrived off Honfleur he changed his tone, and by a display of force, compelled them to accompany him to Dieppe, where, at his instance, the officers of the Admiralty condemned them for illegally trading from one province to another. An appeal to the court of

Rouen reversed this judgment, condemned Du Quesne to pay all the expenses, and fined the Dieppe officers who had perverted justice to the advantage of their townsman. It does not appear that young Du Quesne was engaged in this discreditable affair; but it nevertheless gives us a very clear insight into his early training, and the influences under which he grew to manhood.

After a few years more of trading and piracy the father disappears; nothing certain is known of his fate, but there is reason to believe that he was captured by some Spanish cruisers from Dunkirk, and died there of his wounds about the year 1635. At this time the son appears to have cast in his lot with the service of the king, and to have become in reality, as before in name, an officer of the king's navy. He was appointed to the *Neptune*, a vessel of 200 tons burden, carrying eight small guns, and joined the fleet which assembled at Belle Isle in June 1636, under the command of the Count d'Har-court and M. de Sourdis, Archbishop of Bordeaux. This fleet consisted of forty-two ships rated as men-of-war, all belonging to the crown, of which the largest, the flag-ship, *Saint-Louis*, was of 1,000 tons burden and 46 guns; and was collected with the view of its joining such ships as could be got together at Toulon, and retaking the *Lérins Islands*, which the Spaniards had seized on during the past year, and fortified, with the evident intention of making them a base for operations against the neighbouring coast of Provence.

With thirteen transports in company, and carrying 14,000 soldiers, the fleet weighed from Belle Isle on 23 June, and reached Toulon on 29 July, having lost many men by sickness: a fact not to be wondered at when we

consider the crowded state of these small and filthy ships during the hot season in the Mediterranean.

It might be supposed that, after fitting out an expedition of this magnitude for a special purpose, measures would have been taken to carry out that purpose as speedily as possible, the more so as delay could only serve to enable the Spaniards to complete their defences. It was not so, however. Marshal de Vitry, the governor of Provence, to whom the military command of the expedition was to be entrusted, could not think of embarking under the naval command of Count d'Harcourt, who was not, in fact, a seaman, although by his commission 'lieutenant-general in command of the fleet.' Vitry would not acknowledge this commission as giving any authority over the expedition; Harcourt, on the other hand, asserted his right; Sourdis supported him; and months passed away in fierce and idle squabbles over the council-table, in one of which Vitry went the length of striking Sourdis with his cane. The Archbishop—though permitted by his orders to act as a leader of the expedition and to fight the Spaniards—felt unable to wreak his vengeance on Vitry personally; he complained to Richelieu, who wrote, imploring them to agree; but no attention was paid to this letter, and Vitry and Harcourt arranged to settle their quarrel at the point of the sword. A positive order from the king put a stop to the proposed duel; it could not, however, put a stop to the ill-feeling which existed and continued to exist, so that months passed away and nothing was done. Vitry was supported by strong family interest, and it was not till the following March that Richelieu ventured to recall him from his government. Freed from his obstructive presence, Har-

court and Sourdis carried on their operations with vigour. Sainte Marguerite, the principal of the islands, held out for six weeks ; when it surrendered, the others followed its example ; and M. de Sourdis having, as general, taken a leading part in the capture, now, as priest, chanted the *Te Deum* for the victory. Marshal de Vitry was on this permitted to return to his post ; but as he immediately resumed his quarrel with the two successful generals, he was first seriously admonished by the king and shortly afterwards arrested ; he was sent to the Bastille, and stayed there for more than five years, not being released till after Richelieu's death in December 1642.

Considered as a military operation, the reduction of Sainte Marguerite was a very trifling affair, but it derives interest from the illustration it offers of the curious state of discipline and divided command which then prevailed, and which was not apparently considered reprehensible in itself, but only in so far as it hindered the public service. It was here too that Du Quesne, as captain of the *Neptune*, got his first insight into the realities of war as distinguished from privateering ; and might, had he been so minded, have carried away useful lessons as to the necessity of unanimity and concord. He seems to have been impressed rather the other way, and to have learned that disagreement was the rule of the service.

In the two following years he commanded successively the *Saint-Jean*, of 300 tons, and the *Maquedo*, a Spanish prize, of 600, and was engaged under Sourdis in the naval operations carried on on the north coast of Spain in conjunction with the army under Condé. The active share of the navy in these operations was, however, considerably reduced by the crushing defeat which the

Spanish fleet sustained from the Dutch off the South Foreland in September 1639; and the next year the Archbishop, being appointed to the command of the Mediterranean fleet, took Du Quesne with him to Toulon.

At this time the material force of the French navy consisted of 52 ships of all sizes actually in commission, most of which were very small. There was, however, one, the *Couronne*, which merits a particular notice as being the largest ship then afloat. She is described as being of 2,000 tons burden; as measuring in length 200 feet over all, in extreme breadth 46 feet, and as having a height from poop to keel of 75 feet. She had a complement of 600 men, including two chaplains, and carried 72 guns. The statement of her armament is noteworthy, for we find in it the germ of a principle in which foreign ships have, till lately, differed widely from our own. To the builders of the *Couronne* may, perhaps, be assigned the discovery that a comparatively small number of guns with roomy quarters is more advantageous than a much greater number so crowded together that there is not sufficient room to work them; the truth of this we were slow to realise; and for nearly 200 years French ships were, as a rule, heavier and larger than ours of the same rate. Besides the *Couronne*, there was one ship of 1,000 tons, one of 700, two of 600, and ten of 500 tons; below that they diminished rapidly, and several were of less than 100 tons.

Mere numbers, however, are rarely to be depended on; and this force, comparatively respectable on paper, must be valued in accordance with a memoir sent in by the Marquis de Brezé, a nephew of the cardinal, who succeeded Sourdis in command of the Ocean fleet. 'Ten

of the ships,' he writes, 'are good for nothing; and next year it will be necessary to condemn as many more, for they are very old and strained. Even the flag-ship (the Saint-Louis of 1,000 tons) is more than twenty years old. The building-slips of Indret have (in the three years since they were established) turned out only two large ships and three frigates.' He concludes by recommending that the foreign ministers should find out whether the Dutch or Swedes would be willing to sell some of their ships, of which they had more than they wanted.

It must fairly be supposed that of the twenty ships Brézé here condemns, a fair proportion were of the larger class; so that the estimated force of the French navy was, in reality, insignificant, not only in comparison with the state navy of England, but of Holland, Sweden, or Denmark. I dwell on this because later writers have been much in the habit of speaking of the age of Richelieu as having been a flourishing time for the navy; an idea which is far from correct, though worse times were awaiting it.

In 1640 Catalonia revolted from Spain, and applied to Richelieu for assistance. Sourdis was directed to co-operate with the insurgents, but want of stores and equipment prevented his leaving Toulon till late in the following spring, when he established the blockade of Tarragona, then besieged by the French troops in concert with the Catalans. His force, however, was insufficient to resist the strenuous efforts made by the Spaniards, and after several smart encounters in July and August he was fairly beaten off the coast. Tarragona was re-victualled; and the archbishop, already in disgrace for

his long delay at Toulon—a delay caused by want of stores—was summarily removed from the command for his want of success, although his failure was clearly due to the numerical inferiority of his fleet. It gives an idea of the very unformed state of discipline to find that several of the captains, officers on active service, wrote a semi-public letter expressing their regret at and strong disapproval of this step by the government; and that this letter is signed, amongst many others, by the Chevalier de Cangé, who succeeded to the command of the fleet, and by Du Quesne, who was appointed to the command of an independent squadron.

Up to this time our information concerning Du Quesne is very limited. That at the age of thirty-two he, a man of no family interest, was appointed to such a command affords a fair presumption that, during these six or seven years of actual service, he had distinguished himself by energy, zeal, and intelligence; and he seems to have enjoyed the confidence and favour of Sourdis, himself, undoubtedly, an able man. It is, however, quite certain that he had a forward, pushing temper, which would never permit him to lose anything for want of asserting his own claims, and which led him to insist on what he conceived to be his rights in the most pertinacious manner. A singular instance of this occurred almost immediately after his appointment to this command, and shows some at least of the peculiar difficulties which stood in the way of the early organisation of the French navy.

Being at anchor with his squadron in the Gulf of Rosas, he was joined by a squadron of galleys commanded by M. de Baumes. Du Quesne, as the senior captain,

took command, and gave De Baumes orders not to weigh without permission. De Baumes urged that whilst Du Quesne's seniority would undoubtedly give him the command if the two squadrons were carrying on any operation in concert, it did not give him any authority over the squadron of galleys meeting him in a casual manner and cruising independently; at the same time offering to follow him if he wished to undertake anything against the enemy. Now, according to modern ideas, De Baumes was quite wrong; under any circumstances the junior is bound to obey the senior, and that not as a matter of agreement, but of duty. At that time, however, the laws of precedence were by no means settled; the galleys and the ships were, to a very great extent, distinct services, and the right of an officer of the one to exercise command over an officer of the other, without express commission, was commonly enough disputed. The question, then, between Du Quesne and M. De Baumes was one that should properly have been referred to a higher authority, and the more so as it involved no point of immediate importance. This Du Quesne would not see; he repeated his order in a violent and overbearing manner, 'more suitable to a drunkard brawling in a pothouse than to the general of an army' (this is De Baumes's way of describing it); and when, in the course of the night, the galleys got under way, he fired into them without further ceremony. 'Our officers,' wrote De Baumes to Marshal de Brézé, the French viceroy and commander-in-chief in Catalonia, 'were much astonished and enraged, as they saw themselves murdered by cannon shot in the very port, not knowing to what to attribute this insolence. I beseech you to teach M. Du Quesne that, if he has no

respect for the commander of this squadron, he must at least have some for the king's galleys.' Marshal de Brézé does not seem to have taken any action in consequence of this letter; he probably advised De Baumes to keep out of Du Quesne's way, or Du Quesne to be more moderate; but certainly nothing was done to render such an occurrence impossible for the future; the jealousies between ships and galleys continued, and died out only when the service of the galleys itself came to an end.

That this should be so was perhaps natural; the officers of the ships were, to some extent, seamen; those of the galleys were, for the most part, soldiers; in appointing to the command of a ship, good service and experience were occasionally, though by no means generally, counted for something; the command of a galley was a mere matter of purchase; the galleys considered themselves socially superior to the ships: the ships considered the galleys ignorant and pretentious know-nothings. Differences between the two were thus of frequent occurrence, even after and notwithstanding the edict of 1677, which ordained that squadrons of ships and galleys, accidentally meeting, should continue independent of each other, but that when ships and galleys formed a combined expedition, the officers of the galleys ranked as junior to the ships' officers of the same grade; a distinction of 'with but after' which, as affecting relative rank, has often, in our own service, given rise to much private ill-feeling.

During the summer of 1642 and the following year Du Quesne, still in the Maquedo, continued cruising on the Catalan coast; but the service, principally blockading, has no special interest. Naval affairs were poorly sup-

ported after the death of Richelieu; and Du Quesne being left in 1644 without employment, applied for service under the Swedish flag. His offer was accepted; he commanded the Swedish ship *Regina* in the battle off Ribe on 16 May, and his conduct obtained for him promotion to the rank of admiral-major, or, as we should say, rear-admiral. He continued in the Swedish service for about three years, and returned to France in charge of four ships which Mazarin had bought from the Swedish government.

The supreme command of the French navy was at this period vested in a 'Grand Master of Navigation,' a title which Richelieu himself had held, and which was, at his death, conferred on his nephew, the Marquis de Brézé. Brézé was killed in action with the Spaniards off Orbitello in 1647; after which the queen, Anne of Austria, took the office on herself as 'Grand Mistress,' and continued to hold it till 1650, when it was conferred on the Duke de Vendôme, a natural son of Henry IV. During this time but little attention was paid to the navy; the internal troubles distracted the government, and Mazarin was notoriously averse to a liberal expenditure. Under Richelieu the annual estimate for the navy had been from three to five millions of francs, and this sum, as we have seen, was barely sufficient to meet the requirements of the small fleet. It now fell lower and lower, till at last 300,000 francs was all the government thought fit to devote to the maintenance of the navy. It may well be supposed that these 300,000 francs might better have been devoted to some other service, as they were clearly inadequate to maintain a navy; of course, then, the navy was not maintained, and the few ships

whose names stood on the official lists rotted away and became utterly unserviceable.

But the decay of the navy was not to be attributed solely to the neglect and parsimony of the government. Although too cautious to commit himself to any active support of the failing cause of royalty in England, Mazarin had favoured it so far as to permit privateers to be fitted out. It is difficult to understand what gain he or the royalist party expected to derive from this step; the actual result was that the parliament issued orders for reprisals; and thus, without any declaration of war, and whilst nominal peace continued to exist between the two countries, English and French ships fought whenever they met, with, as might be expected, advantage in the long run to the most numerous. Blake's alleged encounter with four vessels in the Straits, in December 1650, may have been one of these skirmishes; another is pithily described by Whitelocke under date 22 August, 1650—'Letters of some Fights at Sea between the Parliament's Frigates and some French Men-of-war, who were soundly beaten.' This, we may conclude, was the fight which is reported by the French to have taken place near Jersey, in which a squadron of five ships under Du Quesne, bound for Bordeaux, was rather roughly handled. This desultory war ended in September 1652, in the seizure by Blake of the French fleet which had been sent to the relief of Dunkirk, then besieged by the Spaniards: seven ships were sent into Dover, and those that escaped were so damaged as to be valueless.

It is not too much to say that from that time the French navy was altogether unable to undertake any

operation ; it gradually dwindled away ; and when Mazarin died, in 1661, had practically ceased to exist. According to the inquest instituted by Colbert, it consisted of seven ships ' good for nothing but to be broken up,' five ships which might possibly be made seaworthy, and some four or five which might be reckoned as serviceable. The country, then, was destitute of ships, of sailors, of officers, and of money ; for the civil wars and the shameless peculation of every servant of the government had reduced it to the verge of bankruptcy.

During all this time there had been no employment for Du Quesne. He had endeavoured, but without success, to re-enter the Swedish service, and had passed the years from 1650 in domestic retirement. In 1661 he was appointed to the command of a squadron fitting out at Brest, but nearly a year slipped away in dilatory preparation and in grumbling about the want of stores. With great difficulty a fleet of some ten ships of all rates was at last assembled at Toulon, its object being an expedition against the piratical states of Barbary ; but neither ships nor officers seem to have been fit for service.

I have already spoken of the ships ; the officers were almost worse. Du Quesne was an old and competent sailor, but obstinate, jealous, and insubordinate in the extreme. The command was entrusted to M. de Nuchèzes, a commander of the Order of St. John, with whom was associated the Duke de Beaufort, the old leader of the Fronde, and now Admiral of France and Grand Master of Navigation, in succession to his father, the Duke de Vendôme. Between these two there arose a bitterness and ill-feeling which rendered vain any hope of effective action. Nuchèzes wrote against Beaufort, Beaufort wrote

against Nuchèzes; the officers declared themselves for one side or the other, and duels were never-ending. The fleet cruised for a short time, and having exhausted its provisions, but attempted nothing, returned to Toulon. It is impossible to conceive a department of the public service in a worse condition—officers brawling, eager only for their own advantage, disobedient, and utterly incapable; ships rotting at anchor or wrecking themselves on the nearest rock as soon as they got under way; harbours choked with foul and worn-out hulks; commissaries dishonest, and the exchequer empty. Such was the state of the navy in the early days of Colbert's administration.

The reformation worked under Colbert in the course of a few years was astonishing: the harbours were cleared; the ships were numerous and in good order; the naval estimates were liberal, and were honestly administered. The great difficulty lay in procuring seamen and officers; even that was got over; and though it would be too much to say that the crews or their officers were sailors in the true sense of the word, there was amongst them a sufficient sprinkling of the craft to permit the work to be performed creditably. To a war-like people the mere fighting comes by nature. That the French officers of that time should fight was a matter of course, but it was not easy to persuade them to fight only according to order—to fight the proper enemy at the proper time, and to fight no one else.

Of all offenders against strict discipline, Du Quesne, from his high position, was one of the worst; he was not, perhaps, quarrelsome in the ordinary sense; he was not a duellist, but he was excessively cantankerous. On every occasion we find him at variance with his

superiors; his experience as a seaman, his knowledge, his ability, rendered his services indispensable, a fact of which he was fully aware, and of which he took every advantage. 'A man irritable (*épineux*) and difficult to persuade;' 'an able man, but very fond of his own opinion;' 'difficult to control'—these are a few expressions, taken almost at random from the letters of the intendant at Toulon to Colbert.

The fleet continued under the command of M. de Nuchèzes and the Duke de Beaufort, and as these two set the example of quarrelling, it was not to be expected that it could be in good order. Nuchèzes wrote begging that he might be relieved; his health would furnish an excuse. 'I am useless here,' he says, 'and, frankly, I would rather herd cows than command a disorderly and ill-disciplined army.' Beaufort, indeed, seems to have been a man altogether unfit for high command. His birth and rank gave him a certain authority, and he had a handsome person, a noble presence, and a hearty, friendly manner which told well with the men; but he was ignorant, obstinate, opinionated, and yet easily led—an apparent contradiction which is not unfrequently met with. He had in his youth gone through the usual course of instruction, yet, of all the officers in the fleet, he was probably the worst educated. Du Quesne's advantages had been few, but compared with Beaufort, Du Quesne was a literary genius; Du Quesne could, at least, write decently and with some appearance of grammar; Beaufort's attempts at writing, spelling,¹ and grammar were alike outrageous, and in one of his letters to Colbert he attributes his shortcomings in these

¹ For one delicious specimen of his letters, see *Jal*, i. 270.

respects to the rolling of the ship. The evil of competitive examinations is, now-a-days, a fertile subject for declamation, and we hear much about the many able men whom, it is assumed, they would have excluded; it is satisfactory to think that they would also exclude a man such as the Duke de Beaufort. He was Grand Master of Navigation, he was Admiral of France, he commanded a French fleet for about eight years during an exciting and anxious time of reform and progress; but wherever he was concerned nothing prospered. The expedition against Gigéri (Djidjelli) in 1664, successful at first, eventuated in a miserable failure; in 1666 the fleet was to have joined the Dutch previous to the battle off the North Foreland on 11 June (N.S.); he received the news of the battle at Lisbon, and took no part whatever in the war; finally, in 1669, he lost his life in the vain attempt to relieve Candia; and without saying that the blame of these and other smaller failures rests entirely with him, his uniform want of success affords, nevertheless, a fair presumption of his incapability.

During this time, however, the French navy was rapidly becoming more worthy of a great Power. By the purchase of ships and stores, and by the hiring workmen from Holland and Sweden, a numerically respectable fleet was got together as early as 1666. This, as I have just said, was, according to treaty, to have taken part with the Dutch in the war against England, but it did not arrive in the Channel till the middle of September, after a delay which gave rise to the idea that there was a secret understanding between Louis and Charles. It is more probable that it was due

to a determination of the French king not to risk his newly formed fleet: and the marriage of Mademoiselle d'Aumale¹ to the King of Portugal afforded a convenient pretext. The young queen could only sail in summer, for she suffered horribly from sea-sickness, and the whole French fleet was necessary for a safe escort. As a matter of fact, the squadron under Du Quesne, which took her to Lisbon, arrived on 1 August, three days after the fleet under Beaufort had sailed; the two had no communication with each other, and their actual movements seem to have been quite independent.

During all these years Du Quesne's share in the work was in no way prominent. He had no family interest; his captious temper did not make many friends; and though his ability and experience were respected, his zeal and enterprise were considered doubtful. He is constantly reported as fond of staying in harbour, slow in refitting, exorbitant in his demands, overbearing, petulant, and insubordinate. At the same time it must be remembered that he was the oldest officer in the service, and almost the only seaman; that he thus looked with the contempt traditional to the old sailor on all landmen who ventured to have an opinion on naval affairs, and waged war equally on port-intendants and soldiers turned admirals, whom he doubtless, in his secret mind, classed indiscriminately as land-lubbers.

The work of the French navy was, however, at this time, work of progress, not of war, and the credit of the results belongs solely to Colbert. Beaufort was simply

¹ Louise Françoise Elisabeth de Savoie, duchesse de Nemours et d'Aumale, daughter of the duc de Nemours and of Isabelle de Vendôme, sister of the duc de Beaufort.

a stumbling-block in his way, Du Quesne a source of much anxiety; and these were the only officers of rank he had to depend on. Tourville, whose name was pre-eminent some twenty years afterwards, was of a later generation; he entered the French service as a captain in 1667, having previously, as a knight of St. John, distinguished himself in wild cruising against the Turks in the Levant. D'Estrées was altogether a landsman, and having the rank of lieutenant-general in the army on shore, came afloat in 1668, with the understanding that he was shortly to be advanced to a high rank in the navy. After a semi-diplomatic or political voyage to the West Indies, he was made Vice-Admiral of France, and commanded in chief the fleet which nominally acted with the English at the battle of Solebay on 7 June (28 May), 1672.

The appointment of D'Estrées as vice-admiral gave great offence to Du Quesne; he had possibly nourished a secret idea that the rank might be conferred on himself, or it may simply have been that he was determinedly antagonistic to every officer put over his head. The high value put on his technical knowledge preserved him to the service, but it may be doubted whether his abrupt dismissal would not have been more advantageous to it. As it was, he was the ruin of all attempts to enforce discipline, for the squabbles between him and the vice-admiral were as notorious as disgraceful. And yet these two were the commanders of the squadron which joined the English for the summer campaign of 1672.

The battle of Solebay was the first in which the new navy of France took part, and its action in it has been the subject of much adverse criticism, the value of which

can only be decided by an examination into some of the circumstances of the fight.

It is well known that the allied fleet was anchored in Solebay, or, as it is now more commonly called, Southwold Bay,¹ on the coast of Suffolk, in line parallel to the shore—that is, nearly north and south—with the wind at about E.N.E.; and, remaining in that position, in defiance of all nautical rule, and notwithstanding the warning counsel of the Earl of Sandwich, was taken at a disadvantage by the Dutch. The French division, which formed the van of the fleet, was anchored to the south; and, in the natural order, the fleet, on weighing, would have stood towards the south, on the port tack, as had probably been agreed on the day before. The Dutch, however, came in unexpectedly from the north-east; and had the allies stood out on the port tack—that is, towards the south-east—according to the original intention, it is evident that they would have crossed the line on which the Dutch were advancing; they would, in fact, have presented their flank to the enemy, as Blake had done off Portland in 1653, or as, many years afterwards, in 1805, Villeneuve did off Cape Trafalgar. The wind, too, after a short lull, veered to the south of east, thus offering more sea-room to the north; and the English, without hesitation, adopted the only course open to them of escaping from the unfavourable position in which they had allowed themselves to be caught. They hastily and confusedly stood out towards the north-east, on the

¹ This bay was a favourite anchorage of our fleets all through the Dutch wars. The contour of the land has apparently changed a good deal, and Southwold Bay now presents a nearly straight line of coast running north and south.

starboard tack ; the rear division, commanded by the Earl of Sandwich, thus becoming the van and leading into action. Now, whether D'Estrées did not understand the Duke of York's signal, whether he was unwilling to form the rear division of the fleet, or whether, as was commonly said, he had private orders to keep his squadron out of danger, cannot now be certainly known ; what he did was to come to the wind on the port tack, in the natural order, and to stand towards the south or south-east, thereby at once separating and continuing to separate from the rest of the fleet. It is beyond dispute that, in so doing, D'Estrées committed a gross tactical error, the result of which was that the Dutch, leaving a small squadron under Bankert to occupy the French, fell in force on the English. All our histories tell the rest ; the fight was maintained with pertinacious courage on both sides till nightfall, and neither English nor Dutch could strictly claim the victory, though each considered that it inclined in their favour. On one point only were they agreed : the French had treacherously kept out of the fight.

We have no evidence which will permit us to say what secret orders D'Estrées may have had ; one, at least, has recently come to light—an order from Colbert to make his report as favourable as possible ; but the minister's anxiety to encourage the rising navy, his dread lest a too accurate statement might dispirit it, is a ready excuse for some exaggeration, which, being published, has crept into the current French histories. Whether time may produce any other secret order, such as has been spoken of, must be doubted ; nor, indeed, is it necessary to suppose that such ever existed. When we

consider the very rude system of signalling at that day ; that D'Estrées had very little experience at sea, and absolutely none of naval war ; that he was on bad terms with Du Quesne, the second in command, who would delight in seeing him make a blunder ; that Du Quesne led the van of the French squadron, and with his captious temper and bitter hatred of the English might probably enough refuse to sail in their wake ; that the Dutch attack had the nature of a surprise, and the fleet had to get under way so hurriedly that some of the ships cut their cables ; that there was thus no time for explanation ;—taking, I say, all these things into consideration, it would seem strange indeed had no mistake occurred. Supposing D'Estrées impressed with one idea that his division was the van, the movements of the English might easily be beyond his comprehension till he found himself hopelessly separated from them. I do not, of course, say that this is the true explanation of the problem, but it seems at least a plausible one, which is more than can be said in support of the received story which attributes a meaningless piece of treachery to an able if rather unscrupulous government.

As a matter of fact, however, Du Quesne's conduct on this occasion was very severely judged by the French themselves. The vice-admiral distinctly accused him of keeping out of the fight, and of edging away from the enemy. This led to a violent quarrel ; the matter was referred to the court ; and without pronouncing any judgment on the case, it was so evident that D'Estrées and Du Quesne could not advantageously serve together, that Du Quesne was superseded. It is difficult now to say what amount of truth there was in the charge. We

can readily believe that Du Quesne was not very zealous in a fight which, if won, tended so directly to the advantage of the English, whom he detested, and of D'Estrées whom he hated. But on the other hand, it is far from improbable that D'Estrées was quite ready to sacrifice Du Quesne, a personal enemy, to preserve his own credit; and he certainly did not win golden opinions when, the next year, free from Du Quesne's influence, with the same allies and against the same enemies, he had every opportunity of doing so. With all his faults Du Quesne was a gallant man and an able seaman; D'Estrées was an incapable commander, and probably could not tell whether a ship was close to the wind or not. His family interest gained for him the high position and supported him in it, leaving first Du Quesne, and afterwards Martel, his successor, to bear the weight of the popular indignation and of the Court's displeasure.¹

Du Quesne's stay on shore was not long. In January 1674 he was appointed second in command of a squadron fitting out for service in the Mediterranean. After long delay this squadron, consisting of nine ships, and commanded by the Count de Vivonne, sailed for Messina on 1 February, 1675, to assist the revolted townsmen against

¹ M. Jal and others have maintained that the evidence of M. de Feuquières, a midshipman of Du Quesne's own ship, the *Terrible*, as given in a private letter to his father, is conclusive in Du Quesne's favour (*Lettres inédites des Feuquières*, par Étienne Gallois, n. 47, 53). They have not noticed that a midshipman of the *Terrible* was necessarily a violent partisan, and that on a technical point the evidence of a sea-sick boy has no great value. After all, so far as the conduct of the French in the battle is concerned, the question is not, Did the *Terrible* keep close to the wind or not? but, Why did the whole French division stand away on the port tack? My own conclusion is that it was simply a blunder on the part of D'Estrées.

the Spaniards, in conjunction with a smaller squadron of six ships which, under the Chevalier de Valbelle, had sailed a month earlier. On 11 February, off Stromboli, they met the Spanish fleet of twenty-nine ships and fourteen galleys, a force numerically strong, but of very inferior quality. Valbelle's squadron came out to the support of their friends, and the Spaniards, notwithstanding their numbers, would not await the conjoint attack. Suffering the loss of one ship, they crowded all sail and fled to the northward; while the French, with the large convoy of victuallers, passed into Messina.

I do not propose to enter on any detailed account of the operations at Messina during this war, which is a matter of every-day history. My object is merely to trace the influence which the campaign had on the development of the French navy, and on the career of Du Quesne, whom we find now, for the first time, in command of a fleet; for the Count de Vivonne, as viceroy, contented himself with the general direction of affairs.

The local trade of Messina being entirely stopped by the Spaniards, the town was dependent for sustenance on the provisions brought by the French. Valbelle first, and then Vivonne, had given temporary relief, but the expedition was grudgingly supported, and neither the troops required for maintaining the position nor the provisions needed for the town were forthcoming. Great exertions were thus necessary, not so much to extend the French influence as to hold the bare town. Very strong letters on this subject were written by the viceroy, but Du Quesne, who had been sent back to France to convoy the reinforcements, returned in the end of May with only

3,000 men; he was afterwards despatched on a cruise along the north coast of Africa, to arrange about the transport of cattle and corn for the starving population; and then again to Toulon, which place he left in the middle of December, with a fleet of twenty ships of war and six fire-ships, his flag flying on board the *Saint-Esprit*, and having under his orders, amongst others, the Marquis de Preuilly, the Marquis de Villette, the Chevalier de Valbelle, and the Chevalier de Tourville, names dear to France and renowned in naval history.

It was with this fleet that, on 7 January, 1676, near Stromboli, he met the Dutch squadron of eighteen ships, which had been sent into the Mediterranean to the assistance of the Spaniards. De Ruyter, who had been appointed to the command, at the special request of the King of Spain, had vainly protested against being sent out with a force so small; the Dutch authorities had formed an idea that the French navy was merely nominal, and certainly not superior in quality to the Spanish; they judged, therefore, that the Spanish contingent would raise the allied fleet to a decisive superiority. De Ruyter thus found himself in presence of the enemy with a force so inferior in strength as to make it unadvisable for him to attack. His object was to prevent, if possible, the relief of Messina; and, with a southerly wind, he manœuvred between the French fleet and their port, barring their passage, and ready to seize on any advantage that might offer. The French, on the other hand, being superior both in the number and the size of their ships, were anxious to defeat the covering fleet and to break the blockade. During the night the wind shifted to the west or north-

west, and Du Quesne having thus the advantage, ran down towards the enemy. The Dutch, formed in line towards the south-west, received them firmly ; the French van, under M. de Preuilly, suffered a good deal ; but the fight extending along the whole length of the two lines, continued at close quarters throughout the day, the French losing two of their fire-ships in futile attempts to burn the Dutch to leeward. Towards evening it fell calm, and the fleets drifted apart, the damage sustained on each side being nearly equal. The next day the French were joined by a squadron of ten ships from Messina ; this gave them a decided superiority, for the detachment of six Spanish ships which joined the Dutch strengthened them in appearance only, and De Ruyter could not venture on an attack, which Du Quesne, on his part, did not press. The Dutch drew back towards Melazzo, hoping to be able to cut off the rear division of the French as they passed through the Straits ; and Du Quesne, fearing this, after some days' manœuvring stood away to the westward. The Dutch, being in much need of repairs, went to Palermo to refit ; and the French, passing round the south of Sicily, got into Messina.

It seems the invariable rule that an indecisive action is claimed as a victory by both sides ; and this formed no exception. The Dutch had perhaps fair grounds for doing so, for they prevented the French from entering Messina as they intended ; with very inferior force they kept them at bay for more than a week, and obliged them to make a *détour*, which still longer delayed the relief of the town ; they did not arrive in Messina till the 22nd. But the French accounts, deliberately and purposely falsified at the time, have passed into history ; and we

frequently read, in a few words, that the Dutch gave way, and that the French passed through to Messina without hindrance. Du Quesne's merit must be limited to his having, with a force numerically large, of new and heavy ships, but with inexperienced officers and men, fought a gallant action against a fleet weaker indeed in ships and numbers, but well manned, and commanded by the most able and experienced seaman of the day. To have met De Ruyter without suffering a crushing defeat was, for the French, almost equivalent to a victory; it gave them a confidence in themselves and in their admiral which paved the way to future success. It was not, however, till towards the middle of April that they could muster resolution to endeavour to break the blockade which the combined Dutch-Spanish fleet had established. The mere fact that they endured this blockade for more than two months is strong evidence in contradiction of their claim to victory on 8 January; and it was not till De Ruyter threatened their position at Agosta, that they felt it necessary to take active measures against him.

The two fleets met on 22 April, almost under the shadow of Etna, their line extending towards the east; and De Ruyter, having the advantage of a southerly wind, ran down with the van division and attacked the French van with great vigour. Against thirty French ships the allied fleet mustered seventeen Dutch and ten Spanish. Unfortunately the Spanish admiral, Don Francisco de la Cerda, who was the nominal commander-in-chief, insisted on stationing himself with the Spanish division in the centre of the line, a position to which his rank and the numbers of his squadron gave him an

apparent right. The Dutch were thus divided; and as the Spaniards still kept to the wind when De Ruyter ran down against the enemy, the line was broken, and Haan, who commanded the rear division, was kept out of the fight. The whole brunt of the attack thus fell on De Ruyter, who ought to have been overpowered. The French were, however, slow to realise the utter worthlessness of the Spaniards, who, keeping at a respectful distance, fired a few occasional shots; and De Ruyter, having driven back several ships of the French van, came next into contact with the centre, which, under the immediate command of Du Quesne himself, stood on to take their place.¹ Haan had, by this time, managed to get into action; and obtaining a slight advantage over the French rear, their whole line edged away to leeward. Night separated the combatants; the French were lost in the darkness, and De Ruyter, apprehending bad weather, which, in the shattered condition of several of his ships, would have been dangerous, did not care to follow too far. The next morning broke in rain and mist; the French were nowhere to be seen; it was conjectured that they had retired to Messina; and the allied fleet went into

¹ The manœuvres at this time have been very differently described. Jal (n. 218), following the despatch of M. de Vivonne, and to some extent also that of Du Quesne, seems to think that De Ruyter, with his squadron, made a stern board and so came abreast of the French centre. Brandt (689), on the other hand, says that Du Quesne 'seeing that the Spanish admiral held his wind, crowded sail to join his van and support it against De Ruyter.' So also Basnage (n. 681). I have little doubt this was what really happened, and that in doing it, Du Quesne invented a manœuvre which the French repeated several times in the next century.

Syracuse, the Spanish galleys taking in tow the more disabled of the Dutch ships.¹

The weather continued broken for several days, but on the 29th the French, who had with great difficulty kept at sea, appeared off Syracuse. The allies were not in a mood to fight. No one amongst them doubted that they had won a clear if not decisive victory on the 22nd ; but their joy was now turned to sorrow. A wound in the leg, which De Ruyter had received in the battle, not considered dangerous at the time, proved fatal in a very few days : mortification set in, and the admiral died on the 29th, the last and greatest of the Dutch heroes of the English wars, a victim to the parsimony of his government and the miserable inefficiency of the Spaniards. The sting of the allied fleet was drawn, for the Dutch admiral, Haan, who succeeded to the command, was not a man to win distinction under circumstances even less disadvantageous than those in which he was now placed.

The account which I have given of this battle of Agosta is very different from that which it suited the the French government to publish. We know that they gave systematic orders that the official reports were to be made as favourable as possible ; and the story put forth on this occasion was that the allies had been completely defeated, had been chased into Syracuse, and blockaded there. The death of De Ruyter gave a plausible colouring to this story, which the Dutch accounts, De Ruyter's letter to the States, and Haan's letters to the

¹ The pictures and plans in *Recueil de Combats et d'Expéditions Maritimes*, d'après les dessins de N. Ozanne, give a clear and, on the whole, very fair idea of this and Du Quesne's later battles.

King of Spain, contradict in every detail, and which is altogether at variance with the accusations freely made in letters from Du Quesne to Colbert, and in the private correspondence or memoirs of different officers.¹ According to these, several ships, and even the Saint-Esprit herself, did not keep as closely as possible to the wind; in other words, they gave way before the enemy. When, therefore, we find the Dutch accounts, public and private, agreeing in the main with the non-official letters of the French, and when we know that the French official report was prepared to order, there is little difficulty in deciding which is most worthy of credit; and it is after a close comparison of many conflicting statements that I have framed the description of this celebrated battle.

The death of De Ruyter was, however, a terrible blow to the allies, and one from which they could not recover; they made no effort to resume the blockade of Messina, and shortly afterwards went round to Palermo. Here, whilst refitting, they were caught by the French under Vivonne himself, who had embarked with the Chevalier de Tourville on board the Sceptre. The idea that Tourville was the real author of the plan of the attack which followed seems well founded. Vivonne was not a man of energy or experience; Tourville, on the contrary, was a sailor from his youth, and had already won a distinct reputation for enterprise and ability; in a small boat he reconnoitred the position of the enemy, anchored in a crescent along the coast in front of the town; and at a council of war held on board the Sceptre after his return it was decided that the Marquis de

¹ Basnage. ii. 683. Jnl. ii. 220-229.

Preuilly with a squadron of nine ships should, if the wind held as it then was, at north-east, lead in against the eastern division, the main body of the fleet supporting him by attacking the rest. The general outline of the battle fought on this plan on the following day, June 2, bears a striking resemblance to that of the battle of the Nile, and the result was very similar. Preuilly's squadron stood in so close that they let go their anchors on the anchor-buoys of the enemy, and at these close quarters opened an overwhelming fire. The Spanish vice-admiral set the example of cutting his cable and letting his ship drift on shore; the others soon followed his example. The French fire-ships, driven by the north-east wind, were let loose among them, and flames and confusion spread in all directions. The ship of the Dutch rear-admiral was blown up; the Spanish flagship shared the same fate; Haan, the Dutch admiral, was killed; three Dutch and five Spanish ships were burnt or blown up; the destruction ceased only when the French had expended their store of fire-ships, the Spanish and Dutch taking refuge behind the mole, or running themselves aground, out of reach of the enemy's guns. Naval history records few victories more complete; and in the opinion of the French government a great part of the credit reflected on Du Quesne, who was second in command, whilst it was known that Vivonne was not a seaman. Du Quesne, however, does not seem to have taken much part, and certainly not a leading part, in the action; the brunt of the fighting fell on Preuilly's squadron; and, as I have already said, the ingenious tactics adopted were almost universally attributed to Tourville. It was even said that Du Quesne

had not shown any particular forwardness in the fight ; but he was a man with few friends and many bitter enemies, who lost no opportunity of speaking ill of him.

With this severe blow to the allies the active operations of the fleet on the coast of Sicily may be said to have ended ; for the Dutch squadron was shortly afterwards recalled, and the Spaniards were unable to show themselves at sea. The French ships were employed principally in carrying troops or stores from Toulon, till, in March 1678, the French government decided to evacuate Messina ; peace was concluded with Spain, and the revolted Sicilians were left unprotected and exposed to the vengeance of their enemies.

The reconstruction of the French navy may be considered to have been by this time accomplished. "Its organisation and discipline were still imperfect ; gross irregularities were still frequent in the dockyards ; but the system was fairly inaugurated ; the ships were real, new, large, and heavily armed ; the officers were becoming more and more habituated to the sea ; and men were gradually being enrolled for the service of the crown. In the further development of the young navy Du Quesne had an important share, and he seems to have been actively employed for some years in examining into and putting a stop to abuses, or in suggesting remedies. One instance of his work will suffice.

A squadron of four ships, commanded by Tourville, going round from Toulon to Brest, was caught in a gale of wind in the Bay of Biscay. Two of them foundered at sea, with great loss of life. Du Quesne was ordered to inquire into the matter ; he reported that the masts had been badly stayed, and the hulls weak ; that they

were contract-built, and that the work had been scamped. As the result of this report the intendant and master-shipwrights at Toulon, where the ships had fitted out, were put in prison. The intendant had friends, and his imprisonment was not long; the others, though mere subordinates, seem to have had a severe lesson.

In this formation of a new navy there is one point worthy of a special notice; when the ships were employed as troopships, the sickness and mortality were excessive. This tells unmistakably that no advance whatever had been made in cleanliness. The filthy habits on board were not so much the result of conservatism as of ignorance; and it was not till nearly a hundred years later that the importance of cleanliness and ventilation on board ship was fully understood. In the seventeenth century but little attention was paid to purification; the lining of the ship was a convenient receptacle for filth of all sorts; and the state of the bilges can be more easily imagined than described.

In 1681 Du Quesne was sent with a small squadron into the Levant, to repress the Tripoli corsairs, who had been preying on the rising French commerce; and in 1682-83, with a more powerful fleet, against Algiers. These expeditions, which resulted in the liberation of great numbers of Christian slaves, are, from a naval point of view, chiefly remarkable for the first employment of mortar vessels, which were designed by Renau, a young engineer then coming into notice.

In 1684 Du Quesne superintended, rather than commanded, the bombardment of Genoa, and with the close of the year his service came to an end. He died suddenly a few years later, being found dead in his bed on the

morning of 2 February, 1688, sixty-two years after the date of his commission as captain. He had been promoted to the rank of commodore (*chef d'escadre*) in 1647, on his return from Sweden; and in after-years he claimed seniority as lieutenant-general—corresponding to the modern rank of vice-admiral—from 1650; the claim was allowed, though he does not seem to have had any distinct commission. His naval rank never reached higher; his adherence to the reformed religion was used as a pretext for not promoting him; but as it did not hinder the government from rewarding his services with the title of marquis in 1681, and with liberal gifts of money and land, it is at least probable that they considered it unadvisable to give the highest service rank to a man of his captious and obstinate temper, or to give a place of exceptional distinction to a man of low birth.

The great length of time over which his service extended, and the excessive changes through which the country, the government, and, still more, the navy passed, have given to his name a celebrity, and still give to the study of his career an interest, far beyond his personal merits. That he was a man of energy and determination is not to be doubted; but these qualities were principally exhibited against his superiors or colleagues. It is not a little curious to notice that in every action in which he held important command, and especially at Solebay, he was accused of being backward in fight; that he was everywhere accused of unnecessary delay in fitting out, of making difficulties, of preferring his own interests to the good of the service, of greediness and selfishness. His own letters prove that, at least, some of these were not idle charges. The only excuse

we can find for him is that in an age and a society in which eager selfishness was universal, and family connections of the basest kind were unblushingly turned to advantage, he alone had no one to urge his claims ; he had no unchaste interest about the court ; he had to take his own part in the broad daylight of official correspondence. He was perhaps not more greedy than his neighbours though he was so in a more direct and public manner. Beyond this we cannot go. That he was an able officer must be admitted, but that he was a great commander is contrary to evidence ; that he was the conqueror of De Ruyter is contrary to fact.

CHAPTER IV.

*LE BAILLI DE SUFFREN.*¹

ON the two sides of the Channel there has often been held a very different estimate of the conduct of naval commanders, whether English or French; and in few cases has this difference been more clearly shown than in that of the Bailiff de Suffren, boasted of in France, as one of the greatest heroes that has in any time adorned any navy; known in England—if known at all—merely as the commander of a squadron in the East Indies, who fought a series of unimportant actions, with no decisive results, in support of a cause that was ultimately lost. And yet Suffren was no ordinary man; notwithstanding the exaggeration of the French estimate—an exaggeration which almost unconsciously excites a spirit of opposition and of unbelief; notwithstanding the want of result to his labours; the want of that success by which, in England, we prefer to judge of performance, he was a commander of rare skill and energy; rich in resources, of unflinching courage, and of untiring perseverance. I conceive, therefore, that we shall derive both interest and advantage from a critical examination of De Suffren's career; unsurpassingly brilliant as are the achievements

¹ *United Service Magazine*, May and June, 1867.

of so many of our own naval heroes, our good fame can never suffer by a due award to the noblest and bravest of our enemies.

Pierre André de Suffren Saint-Tropès,¹ a younger son of a noble family of Provence, was born on 17 July, 1729. At the age of fourteen, he was admitted into the navy of France, as a preparation for his entering, at a later period, into the Order of St. John; and his first service, as a cadet, was on board the *Solide*, a 64-gun ship, one of the allied fleet which, under Admirals de Court and Navarro, fought the indecisive action with the English, off Toulon, on 22 February, 1744. Though the brunt of the battle fell on the Spaniards, some of the French ships, and amongst others, the *Solide*, were actually engaged, and Suffren, still a mere boy, made acquaintance with the cruel realities of war. In the following year, on board the *Pauline*, he was present in the disastrous affair off Martinique, when Vice-Admiral Townsend captured, or drove ashore, a great part of the valuable convoy which, under the command of Commodore Macnamara, was intended to victual the French West-Indian settlements; and the year after, 1746, in the *Trident*, took part in the attempt made to recapture Cape Breton. The anxiety consequent on the failure of the expedition carried off the Duke d'Enville, the com-

¹ The principal authorities for the life of Suffren are: *Histoire du Barilh du Suffren*, par Ch. Cuna†, *Histoire de la Campagne de l'Inde par l'Escadre Française sous les ordres de M. le Barilh de Suffren*, par le Citoyen Trublet (M. Trublet de la Villejégu), capitaine de Vaisseau; *Essai historique sur la Vie et les Campagnes du Barilh de Suffren*, par M. Hennequin; and best, though latest, *Histoire de la Marine Française pendant la Guerre de l'Indépendance Américaine*, par E. Chevalier, capitaine de vaisseau.

mander-in-chief, and so preyed on the mind of the captain of the Trident, M. d'Estourmel, on whom, after the death of the duke, the command devolved, as to drive him to commit suicide. Storm by sea, inclement weather on land, improper exposure and small-pox proved themselves more fatal than any hostile effort. Such numbers of men, sailors as well as soldiers, perished, that a hasty retreat to the ships became absolutely necessary; and of those ships, weakened by their losses, many were captured, almost without resistance, on their way across the Atlantic.

The next year, 1747, Suffren was serving in the advanced rank of ensign, on board the *Monarque*, of 74 guns, when that ship, with five others (the Trident amongst the number), was captured by Rear-Admiral Hawke, in the Bay of Biscay, on 25 October. He did not remain long a prisoner, being exchanged in the course of a few months; but the losses that France had sustained during the war had reduced her navy to comparative inaction; the young ensign was unable to obtain employment, and after the peace, which was signed on 7 October, 1748, he went to Malta, to fulfil the wishes of his family, by joining the Order. For six years he remained amongst the Knights Hospitallers, serving actively on board their ships in the perpetual war which they waged against the Turk; and we may perhaps fairly attribute a certain unscrupulousness of character to the fact of his having been engaged for so long a period, at the turning-point of his life, from the age of nineteen to twenty-five, in this sort of semi-piratical adventure.

On his return to France, Suffren was appointed to

the Dauphin Royal, of 70 guns, one of the fleet sent out to North America, under M. Dubois de la Motte, in the spring of 1755. Admiral Boscawen, in command of a powerful fleet, left England about the same time, and off Louisbourg seized on two ships of De la Motte's squadron—the Alcide and Lys—separated from the rest in a fog. The Dauphin Royal was nearly sharing the same fate, but escaped into Louisbourg, from whence—being unable to rejoin the admiral—she returned to Brest.

Though the two countries, in an unrecognised and privateering sort of way, continued to prey on each other's shipping, it was nearly a year after this before there was a formal declaration of war. At that time Suffren was a lieutenant of the *Orphée*, 64; and in her was engaged in the notorious action off Minorca on 20 May, 1756. Early in the next year he was appointed to the *Océan*, 80, carrying the flag of M. de la Clue (*chef d'escadre*) and was serving in that ship when she, together with a great part of the Toulon fleet, was blockaded in Cartagena by Admiral Osborn. During that time he had the pain of seeing his former ship, the *Orphée*, as well as the *Foudroyant*, and the rest of the squadron under the Marquis Du Quesne,¹ captured by the English in their attempt to break the blockade, on 28 February, 1758. De la Clue, who appears to have been wanting in that daring energy which is one of the first qualities in a naval commander, was content to witness their capture without making an effort to save them from their fate; although a junction with Du Quesne would have raised his force to a numerical equality with that

¹ Du Quesne-Menneville, son of Du Quesne-Monnier, the nephew of Abraham Du Quesne, the first Marquis.

of the blockaders. The capture of these ships and the lateness of the season, rendered it unnecessary or unadvisable for the English to remain any longer off Cartagena, and whilst Osborn withdrew to Gibraltar, De la Clue got back to Toulon.

The next year, 1759, was singularly fatal to the French arms afloat. Immense preparations were made for landing on the coast of England; a large fleet was collected at Brest, under the Marquis de Conflans, to cover the expedition; and that not being considered sufficient, De la Clue, with the Mediterranean fleet, was ordered round from Toulon. But Boscawen, with a powerful force, appeared before that port, and De la Clue did not consider himself justified in trying the chances of battle. In vain did the English admiral try to tempt or to goad him into coming out; De la Clue firmly adhered to his resolve to stay in, until want of water and provisions compelled Boscawen to break up the blockade and retire to Gibraltar. Whilst he was there, the French having come out from Toulon, attempted to pass the Straits. Boscawen, however, by a judicious distribution of his frigates, had sufficient intelligence of their movements; he met them in the narrow waters, off Cape de S. Maria, where, on 18 August, they sustained a signal defeat. De la Clue, although possessing a fair share of personal courage, seems to have been entirely unfitted for the command of an important fleet. On the day of battle, things directed themselves; several of the French ships were out of the way altogether, and, as far as rendering assistance went, might as well have remained at Toulon. Of the ships of the squadron that did engage, almost all were captured; the *Océan* ran ashore

near Lagos, and M. de la Clue, who had been mortally wounded in the action, was landed; the ship, however, was taken possession of, and burnt by the English; and M. de Suffren, for the second time, became a prisoner of war.

A few months later, the Brest fleet under M. de Conflans experienced a fate similar to that of the Toulon squadron. It was destroyed by Sir Edward Hawke, in Quiberon Bay, on 20 November. As this fleet was larger than the other, so was its defeat more severe; but the combined result of the two actions was to leave France, for the time, powerless in European waters. Suffren returned home after a short captivity, but remained unemployed till the peace in 1763, when he was ordered in command of a small vessel, the *Caméléon*, to cruise in the Mediterranean for the protection of trade. In her, and afterwards in the *Singe*, he continued for four years employed more or less actively in restraining the Morocco pirates; and was present at the bombardment of Salée in June, 1765, and in the severe repulse which the French squadron subsequently met with at Larrache. In 1767 he was promoted to the rank of commander (*capitaine de frégate*), and after a few months, during which he served as flag-captain on board the *Union* frigate, in an embassy to the court of Morocco, he went once more to Malta. For four years longer he remained in the service of the Order—in which he acquired the distinction of commander—and appears to have been engaged in active cruising during a large proportion of that time. Being made a captain (*capitaine de vaisseau*), in 1772, he returned to France, and commanded successively the frigates *Mignonne* and *Alcmène* in a series

of experimental cruises. In the early part of 1777 he was appointed to the *Fantasque*, 64; which, on the declaration of war in March, 1778, was one of twelve ships sent to America under the orders of Count d'Estaing.

In company with the fleet, or on specially detached service, the *Fantasque* remained on that station for nearly two years; was present when Howe's position at Sandy Hook was judged unassailable, July 1778; took part in the abortive attack on Barrington at St. Lucia, 15 December 1778; and was the leading ship in the battle of Grenada on 6 July 1779. The battle, like so many others in the last century, was indecisive, and, as usual in such cases, each has claimed a victory that cannot rightly be assigned to either. Both fleets sustained a good deal of damage, and the French drew off, but retained the prize for which they were fighting. Suffren, in his official letter, speaks of his loss in men, and of the damage done to his ship and rigging as serious, though less so than the honourable post he had filled might lead one to apprehend: the number of killed and wounded on board the *Fantasque* was returned as sixty-two.

Suffren went back to France in the end of 1779, when he appears to have been well received by the government. In the following March he was given a pension of 1,500 livres, as a mark—so runs the order—of the king's satisfaction at the zeal and activity he had displayed in the course of his service, and in particular whilst commanding the *Fantasque*, in the fleet of the Count d'Estaing; as well as at the bravery and talent which he had given proofs of in various battles, and especially in the battle of Grenada. Consequent on this, he was appointed in April

of the same year to the *Zélé*,¹ and sailed from Brest to join the allied fleet then blockading Gibraltar, and cruising off Cadiz.

It was shortly after his arrival that they fell in with a large and valuable English convoy, which—for the East and West Indies together—numbered no less than sixty-three ships. This convoy was nominally under the order and protection of Captain Moutray, in the *Ramilles* (with the frigates *Thetis* and *Southampton*), who made out the Franco-Spanish fleet about midnight of 8 August. He immediately, by general signal, directed the convoy to alter course to the westward, at the same time altering course himself. Unfortunately, the merchant ships did not attend to the commodore's orders; they continued their southerly course, which carried them, by daybreak, almost into the middle of the enemy. They were thus taken possession of with only two exceptions,—ships that were coppered, and had kept with the *Ramillies*. The actual loss to England was enormous, and was rendered greater by the circumstances under which it happened; for in consequence of such a heavy blow inflicted on their opponents, the court of Spain abruptly broke off negotiations for a separate peace; whilst, at the same time, our establishments abroad, both naval and military, were deprived of the stores which were being sent out, and of which they stood in great need. Captain Moutray was dismissed his ship, by sentence of court-martial, 13 February 1781; but the following year, under the new administration,

¹ The same ship which, under another captain, was such an important factor in the manœuvres of the French fleet prior to the battle of Dominica, on 12 April, 1782.

he was appointed to the command of another ship, the *Edgar*; and a year or two later, to be commissioner of the navy at Antigua.¹

A squadron of seven line-of-battle ships, under M. de Suffren, chased the *Ramillies* and her frigates for some time; but finding themselves completely outsailed, they returned to pick up the straggling merchant-men. It was afterwards—and in consequence of this—that Suffren addressed a strong paper to the minister of the navy, on the importance of coppering the bottoms of ships of war. In this paper he pointed out that, as the English had already coppered several of their ships, and were engaged in coppering others as fast as possible, it must be considered not merely advantageous, but absolutely necessary, for the French to do the same; otherwise the enemy would always have the option of battle, or of retreat; would be able to keep the sea longer, and, even with inferior forces, to prey on the French commerce. He then proceeded, in illustration of his views, to give instances where ships had been manifestly at a disadvantage through not being coppered; he entered into the minute details of how and where a sufficient supply of copper was to be obtained; and concluded with again strongly urging the necessity of coppering their own ships, and of inducing their allies to copper theirs. The recommendations of M. de Suffren were too sensible to be strictly followed; and indeed, notwithstanding his argument founded on the number of ships in our service, already coppered, such ships were

¹ Whilst commissioner at Antigua, a curious question arose as to his right to fly a broad pennant and, whilst on half-pay, do the duties of senior officer. See my select *Letters and Despatches of Lord Nelson*, p. 29-31.

then, and for some time after, exceptions to the general rule. The first ship in the English navy which was coppered was the Dolphin frigate, in 1764, when she was being fitted for her voyage round the world, under Commodore Byron; the next was, I believe, the Alarm, a 32-gun frigate, which was commissioned for the Mediterranean, 1769, by Captain John Jervis. The adoption of the new sheathing was however very slow, and years passed away before it became at all common. Till then, ships' bottoms were smeared over with some composition of tallow or wax, which, of course, offered little or no obstacle to the various plants and animals which infest the sea; and even this slight protection was rubbed off in a few weeks by the action of the waves, or by the friction, as the vessel was forced through the water.

Early in the following year the French fleet returned to Brest; the Zélé was put out of commission, and Suffren appointed to the Héros, a new ship of 74 guns, as senior officer in command of a squadron of five ships of the line about to proceed to the East Indies; with an order to take acting rank as commodore (*chef d'escadre*) when past the Cape of Good Hope.

We thus arrive at the turning point in Suffren's history. After a career of extraordinary activity and incident,—after thirty-eight years of almost uninterrupted sea service, whether in the French navy or in the Maltese cruisers, he was now appointed to a command in which he would be able to reduce to practice the rules which the hard chances of war had taught him. He had had, indeed, unexampled opportunities of studying the higher part of his profession. Engaged in almost every naval action that had been fought since the time of his child-

hood ; twice a prisoner in the hands of the enemy ; for nearly five years captain of a ship forming part of an experimental squadron ;—it is difficult to imagine a series of lessons more adapted to qualify a courageous and determined man, a zealous and intelligent officer, for independent command. Such a man, such an officer, so schooled was Suffren, when at the age of fifty-two he was appointed to the command of the East Indian squadron.

At this time, the English government was fitting out an expedition against the Dutch settlements at the Cape of Good Hope ; and to defend that colony was the primary object of the French. Suffren accordingly left Brest on 22 March 1781. The English had left a few days before ; the squadron, consisting of four ships of the line, three frigates, and a very large number of transports, store-ships, &c., sailed from Spithead on 13 March, under the command of Commodore George Johnstone, a man of no professional reputation, who by loud talk, and virulent criticism of Lord Howe in the House of Commons, had induced the public to form a high opinion of his bravery and skill. Seldom has a greater mistake been made. Johnstone proved himself to be utterly unfit for such a position ; and through his carelessness, ignorance, and incapacity, the objects of the expedition were entirely frustrated.

The aim of M. de Suffren was to get to the Cape as soon as possible ; but one of his ships, the *Artésien*, which had been destined in the first instance for the West Indies, and had been ordered to the Cape at the last moment, found it necessary to water at the Cape Verd Islands. To avoid a separation which might be dangerous, as well as to take advantage of the chance of

refreshing his ships' companies, which were sickly, Suffren with the whole squadron accompanied the *Artésien* to Port Praya, in St. Jago, and arrived there on 16 April. He found the bay occupied by the English fleet, which Johnstone—although perfectly aware that a French squadron was being sent out to oppose him—had anchored in the most confused and promiscuous order; the transports outside and all round the ships of war, whose fire they thus in a great measure masked. The French commodore at once noticed the error of the English; and further conjecturing (as was the fact) that they would probably be busy watering, and that their boats and many of their men would be on shore, he resolved to attack immediately, and stood into the bay. A more scrupulous man might have respected the neutrality of the Portuguese harbour; a less audacious one might have shrunk from thrusting his squadron in amongst a fleet that, in guns and men, far outnumbered his own; but scrupulousness and timidity were equally strangers to the character of Suffren; and the blunders of Commodore Johnstone had so crippled the strength of his fleet that, had the French ships followed into the attack with as much determination as their commander led, it would have been in very great danger. But whilst the *Héros* and the *Annibal* anchored in the midst of the English ships of war, and closely engaged the *Hero* and the *Monmouth*, the others—whether from timidity, from misapprehension, or from want of skill and seamanship, allowed themselves to drift about the bay, firing random broadsides into some of the merchant ships, till they were carried by the tide down to leeward, and were unable to take any effective part in the fight.

Left thus to themselves, exposed to the fire of all the English ships—men-of-war or armed transports—which could bring a gun to bear, the *Héros* and the *Annibal* were very roughly treated. The *Annibal* was completely dismasted; had seventy killed—her captain, M. de Trémigon, amongst the number—and a hundred and thirty wounded. The *Héros* also suffered severely; though her masts were still standing, they were much damaged, and most of the shrouds were shot away; she had thirty-four killed and fifty-six wounded; and Suffren, under the circumstances, felt compelled to retreat. That he was permitted to do so, speaks volumes as to the incapacity of the English commodore. The two French ships cut their cables and drifted out to sea; the *Annibal*, commanded by her first lieutenant, M. de Galles, setting some small sail on the stump of the foremast, until taken in tow by the *Sphinx*. More than three hours afterwards, the English ships got under way and stood out, apparently in pursuit of the retreating enemy. But Commodore Johnstone was a man of talk, not of action. After wasting the afternoon in waiting for the *Isis*, which had been partially dismasted by a passing broadside from one of the French ships, he discovered towards evening, that he had given no rendezvous to the convoy, and that it would be imprudent to let himself be carried too far to leeward of Port Praya; he accordingly hauled to the wind and stood back into the bay.

Suffren not having been able to crush (as he had hoped) the English before their arrival at the Cape, resolved to hurry on to anticipate them there. With the *Annibal*, now jury-rigged, in tow, the squadron arrived in Simon's Bay on 21 June, exactly a month

before the English appeared off Cape Town. Johnstone's dilatory conduct had saved the colony. The squadron was not able to attempt anything against the combined French and Dutch forces ; the troops were not even landed ; and the seizure of a few merchant ships in Saldanha Bay was the only result of this costly expedition. Commodore Johnstone, fortunately for the country, was never employed again. He attempted to turn the indignation of the government on to Captain Sutton, of the *Isis*, who was tried by court martial, but was honourably acquitted. Captain Sutton, in return, brought a civil action against the commodore, for maliciously accusing him of an offence of which he was innocent. He obtained a verdict assigning him 5,000*l.* damages ; but years passed away in appeals or counter-appeals to different courts ; Captain Johnstone died in 1787, and the fine was never paid.

The conduct of the French commodore in this action has often been severely commented on. He has been accused of rashness, of foolhardiness, of ignorance even, in taking his squadron into a position such that nothing but favouring fortune, added to the incapacity of his enemy, could have saved him from destruction. Such a charge seems to me inadmissible. The first object of the French was to protect the Cape ; to do that, Suffren had been carrying on under a press of sail, in order, if possible, to pass the enemy who had left ten days before him. By what he could only consider as a piece of luck, he found that enemy, to whom haste ought to have been as much a consideration as to himself, wasting precious time in a neutral port. He had outrun him in the passage to St. Jago, but he could not certainly calculate on being able also to outrun him in the further passage to

the Cape. The confused manner in which the English fleet was anchored, tempted to an attack. The character of the English commodore had probably not escaped the acute intelligence of a man like Suffren: as a talker in the House of Commons, Johnstone had brought himself prominently before the naval world, and Suffren, who had been in the fleet opposed to Lord Howe in North America, and more particularly off Rhode Island on 10 August, 1778, was able to estimate at their proper value the noisy and vituperative absurdities by which his present antagonist had worked his way to public notice. And independently of all other reasoning, the result of Suffren's bold measure fully justified its adoption. It was not as successful as it might have been; but it attained the principal aim of the French as completely as if it had towered beyond their wildest and most visionary hopes. It so delayed the sailing of the English fleet, or—to speak more correctly—it gave such an excuse for so delaying it, that instead of a close race to the Cape, the French and Dutch had ample time to make all possible preparations. The attack in Praya Bay, although repulsed with considerable loss, was the salvation of Cape Colony; and it is not for us to scrutinise too closely the steps by which such a result was obtained, when our own naval records so teem with instances where some of our most justly distinguished commanders have set their reputation and the safety of their fleet on a chance, compared to which the hazard of a die might be considered security.

The first object of his mission having been thus accomplished, Suffren, leaving behind him troops and stores to render the Dutch settlements more secure for

the future, hoisted his broad pennant¹ and went on with his squadron to the Isle of France. He anchored at Port Louis on 25 October of the same year, 1781.

The war which was raging in Europe had early extended itself to the Indian seas ; and the French having formed a close alliance with our inveterate enemy, Hyder Aly, hoped, apparently, to regain a portion at least of the Oriental influence which they had lost some five and twenty years before. But their naval commanders in that part of the world were not equal to the task. M. de Tronjoli, having received a serious check from Commodore Vernon, retired to the Mauritius, and the English took possession of Pondicherry, the last important settlement of France on the Indian coast. In the beginning of 1781 M. d'Orves, who had succeeded M. de Tronjoli in the command, brought a strong squadron into Indian waters, but only to retire without venturing on any undertaking that could in any way benefit the common cause of France and of Hyder Aly. In vain did this latter offer supplies of provisions or water for the ships ; in vain did he offer to retake Pondicherry and to establish there a naval magazine : M. d'Orves could not be tempted to pursue a vigorous course ; and—refusing even to land any of his men to serve with the native army—he returned to the Isle of France. He arrived there on 1 April, and there he remained till the end of the year.

Suffren, however, gave a new life to the French counsels. Although his squadron had many defects after so

¹ This, as was said above, was only local rank. On receiving his account of the fight in Port Praya, the king ordered a commission as *chef d'escadre* to be sent out to him ; but it did not reach him till the end of February, 1783.

long a voyage, and the fight in Praya Bay—the Annibal, for instance, being only jury-rigged—and notwithstanding the meagre resources of the small colony, such was the commodore's own energy, and the energy which he knew how to instil into those with whom he came in contact, that in less than a month he was ready for sea ; and M. d'Orves, yielding to the impulse of a will stronger than his own, though nominally subservient to it, at last made the signal to weigh. Accordingly the fleet—which, with Suffren's squadron, amounted to no less than eleven ships of the line, besides six frigates and corvettes (three of each)—left Port Louis on 17 December, and proceeded towards the coast of India, capturing on their way, near Point de Galle, on 21 January, the English 50-gun ship Hannibal, which, with three others, had been detached by Commodore Johnstone to join Sir Edward Hughes, the English commander-in-chief in Indian waters. The other three ships, the Hero, Monmouth, and Isis, were more fortunate ; they passed safely up the coast, and joined the main body of the fleet at Madras.

M. d'Orves, whose health had been failing for some time past, died on 9 February, leaving the command to Suffren. With a resolution to which the fleet had long been a stranger, he at once made his way to Madras, where Sir Edward Hughes, with a very inferior force, was known to be lying. The English, however, were joined by the three new arrivals in time to prepare them to meet their formidable enemy ; and when Suffren came in sight of Madras, instead of finding, as he expected, only a few ships which must fall an easy prey, he found a squadron of respectable force, though still inferior to his own, and posted so strongly under the batteries on

the shore, that he shrank from the designed attack. He accordingly anchored at some little distance from the English, and made the signal for all the captains to come on board. He explained to them his reasons for thinking an attack unadvisable; and as the senior captains agreed with him that it would be better to continue the voyage, the thing was considered as settled; when, to the astonishment and annoyance of his elders, M. de Salvert, commanding the *Fine*, a 36-gun frigate, opposed this decision on the grounds that their departure would have the appearance of timidity, and would increase in the minds of the natives the unfavourable impression which the conduct of the fleet in the former year had created; and besides, that there was room to pass in shore of the two southernmost ships of the enemy, which were out of reach of the forts, and might be attacked with advantage.¹

The only effect of M. de Salvert's opinion thus given was to raise a feeling of ill-will against him among the senior officers of the fleet; and they seem even to have hinted that it was easy for him to offer bold counsels, inasmuch as, being in a frigate, he could not be called on to carry them into force. On 20 June in the following year, De Salvert, then in a ship of the line, had an opportunity of showing the falsehood of such aspersions on his courage; but, notwithstanding his gallant conduct

¹ Trublet, p. 37. M. Chevalier thinks this story more than doubtful, 1stly, because it is not mentioned in the journal of the *major de l'escadre*, 2ndly and chiefly, because he considers it highly improbable that a young officer of M. de Salvert's rank and position—he was a *lieutenant de vaisseau*—would have ventured on an opinion contrary to that of the commander-in-chief, the hero of Port Praya. The *major* might very well pass over a proposal to which no weight attached, and it is exactly the supposed impudence of it which rendered it worthy of M. Trublet's notice.

and death, French writers, taking their tone from the hostile feeling of the fleet, have perpetuated the calumny De Salvert was a brave and spirited man; and, as far as we can judge from his actions, there is no reason to believe that he would not gladly have shared in an attempt to carry his counsel into execution. The commandere, however, thought it impracticable, and the fleet continued on its way.

In the month of February, a northerly wind blows pretty steadily in the Indian Ocean and Bay of Bengal; and on this account, Suffren having in the first place stood out to sea, had made the land to the north, that is, to windward of Madras; he had then dropped down the coast, and now continued his course southward. As soon as he was well to sea, Sir Edward Hughes also weighed. His doing so caused great surprise among the French, as they could not conceive it possible that with nine ships he would come out to attack them with twelve; and it is most probable that he had not any such positive intention, but that he wished rather to take, destroy, or scatter their convoy, and perhaps also to prevent or obstruct their landing the troops which they had on board.¹ The French, however, were incredulous; and thinking that the English were merely shifting berth, took little or no notice of them, till the next morning Suffren awoke from his dream of security to find that Sir

¹ Cunat, whom Chevalier follows, thinks that Hughes's object was to slip down the coast in order to cover Trincomalee, which he supposed might be Suffren's aim. Hughes himself merely says: 'At four in the afternoon the enemy weighed and stood to the southward; when I immediately weighed and stood after them.' I feel therefore at liberty to suppose that what he actually did first was what he primarily hoped to do.

Edward had, during the night, slipped past him, in shore, and was now spreading destruction among the convoy, which, as a precautionary measure, he had posted to leeward of his fleet. He immediately hastened to the rescue, but before he could arrive at the spot, the English had seized on six merchantmen ; one of which, the *Lawriston*, a transport carrying three hundred soldiers, and laden with artillery, ammunition, and military stores, was a very valuable prize. The sight of the French fleet under press of sail compelled Sir Edward to call off his own ships from the chase, and to form line of battle ; but darkness closing in prevented any encounter that night.

The next day, 17 February, the wind, though irregular and squally, being still from the north-east, gave the French an advantage which Suffren at once endeavoured to avail himself of. Sir Edward, on the other hand, manœuvred throughout a great part of the day, in order, if possible, to weather on the French line ; but the squalls and slight shifts of wind continually prevented him ; and in one of these squalls, about four o'clock in the afternoon, Suffren was able to engage the rear division of our fleet, which was formed in a somewhat irregular line toward the south-east. The squall lasted but for a short time, and was followed by a nearly perfect calm, during which the principal part of the French fleet was clustered round the five sternmost ships of the English. The four ships in the English van could not tack to come into the fight ; the ships of the French rear kept aloof from the combat ; and in this way a partial, but very severe struggle took place. The brunt of it fell on the *Exeter*, a small 64, carrying the broad pennant of Commodore King. After suffering severely from the broad-

sides of all the French ships that joined in the battle, she was, later on, closely engaged by the *Brillant* and *Flamand*, ships of equal force; and the French at one time believed that she was on the point of yielding to the odds brought against her. Commodore King took a different view of his position. When the two 64's were bearing down with the evident intention of bringing her to close action, the master asked what was to be done. 'There is nothing to be done,' said the commodore, as with his handkerchief he wiped away the brains of the flag-captain, Reynolds, which a cannon-ball had just dashed into his face—'there is nothing to be done but fight her till she sinks.'

After two hours of this unequal combat, that is about six o'clock, a lucky squall from the south-east materially changed the position of affairs. The four ships of the English van were able to come to the assistance of their comrades; and Suffren, seeing this new enemy approaching, drew his ships out of the fire, in order to reform his line and receive the attack. The *Exeter*, however, was so disabled, as also was the *Superb*, Sir Edward Hughes's flag-ship, which had, next to the *Exeter*, been the principal aim of the enemy, that the admiral did not feel able to renew the battle, and a slight distant interchange of shots was all that followed the pause. The two fleets separated during the night, and both had suffered too much to permit them at that time to look for each other. The English accordingly went to Trincomalee, and the French to Pondicherry, which had been, a short time before, occupied by the native troops.

In this battle, fought off Sadras, the loss of men in the two fleets was singularly equal. The English had

thirty-two killed, eighty-three wounded ; the French loss is stated as thirty killed and a hundred wounded, but it almost seems as if these were given as round numbers. There was probably also but little difference in the damage done to mast or hull ; but it was, perhaps, more equally divided among the French ships than among our own, two or three of which, and in an especial degree, the *Exeter*, suffered very severely.

The discontent of Suffren with the result was notorious. He had fought well ; he had made a most judicious use of the advantage which the wind gave him, and which the calm that followed his attack had preserved for him ; four English ships, unable to tack, could not get near the scene of action ; and the rear division—that is the five ships astern of the centre—opposed to twelve of the enemy, ought to have been overwhelmed. They might have been, had all the twelve fought with the same determination as the *Héros*, the *Flamand*, or the *Brillant*. But several of the others, and particularly the *Artésien* and the *Annibal*, took little or no share in the battle, and as far as being of any use went, were merely lookers on, notwithstanding the signal, flying the whole time, for them to come within pistol shot of the enemy.

The battle off *Sadras*, however, indecisive as it was, and notwithstanding the capture of some of their convoy, gave the French a definite advantage in the field of Indian politics. They had fought what, at least, seemed to be a gallant action with the English, till then all-powerful at sea, and had not been beaten. Of Suffren there could no longer be any doubt ; he had entered heartily into the cause, and *Hyder Aly* at once showed a favourable disposition to form a closer alliance. During

the commodore's stay at Porto Novo, whither he had proceeded from Pondicherry, he succeeded in making an agreement, by the terms of which a French agent (M. Piveron de Morlat) was to reside at Hyder's court, and the French troops, acting independently under their own officers, with a considerable native force, cavalry as well as infantry, attached to them, were taken into Hyder's pay.

Having landed the troops, and refitted the ships as far as his resources permitted him, Suffren quitted Porto Novo on 23 March; on the 25th off Tranquebar he was joined by the frigate *Bellone*, and by the *Chaser*, an 18-gun corvette, which she had captured off Madras; from these he learned the movements of Sir Edward Hughes, who after having refitted at Trincomalee had returned to Madras, and had taken from there a considerable number of soldiers which he was now carrying to Trincomalee as a garrison for the forts. De Suffren at once resolved to go to the southward: but owing to the baffling wind that then prevailed, he did not come abreast of Ceylon till 8 April. On the 9th, at daybreak, the English fleet was discovered; but as it was to windward, and as Sir Edward wished in the first place to land the troops and stores at Trincomalee, M. de Suffren was unable to bring him to action till the 12th. By that time the two fleets were very close to the shore; and though only a few leagues from his port, Sir Edward, by keeping away towards it had got to leeward of the French, so that it was no longer possible for him to avoid the battle. The circumstances were far from favourable. Having taken it for granted that the French would be unwilling to force him to fight, he now found himself jammed on a dangerous lee shore,

with a superior fleet outside, able to choose its own mode of attack. He was, however, a brave man and a good seaman ; although his judgment as an admiral may at times have been at fault, he seems never to have felt any hesitation about meeting his adversary ; and on the present occasion, though for the sake of the garrison of Trincomalee, he had wished to avoid an immediate action, he met it cheerfully when it was forced upon him. Within the last few days two ships, the Sultan and Maganime, newly come from England had joined him ; and though these, after the long voyage, were foul and sickly, a very large proportion of their crews being down with scurvy, they still, in a measure, did away with the marked inferiority of his numbers. His line now consisted of eleven ships, which he formed on the starboard tack, towards the north, and waited for the enemy, who came up with the wind astern, and commenced the battle about two o'clock in the afternoon.

•De Suffren's qualities as a tactician were of the first order, and in that age of nautical pedantry, he appears as one of the earliest who endeavoured to apply sound principles to the conduct of battles at sea. As in armies so in fleets, that one is effectively the most numerous that can bring the greatest number into action at a given point ; and it is not a little curious that, on the very same day, in different hemispheres, this, as a new system of naval tactics, was inaugurated by the admirals of two different nations ; for it was on this same 12 April 1782, that Sir George Rodney, in the West Indies, gained a decisive victory by means of a manœuvre which, though widely different in detail, was essentially similar to that which M. de Suffren put in practice in the East ; the

concentrating, that is, the attack on a part of the enemy's fleet, instead of dispersing it along the whole. Bound by the formulæ of the 'Fighting Instructions,' none of our admirals had ventured to apply it; and since the days of Du Guay-Trouin, no Frenchman in command of a squadron had thought of attacking. In the West Indies, the accident of a varying wind gave Rodney the opportunity of putting in practice the idea which he had attempted to develop on 17 April 1780; and we have already seen how, in the East Indies, on 17 February 1782, fortune had pointed out to Suffren the way to attain tactical advantage. He was now, on 12 April, ready to avail himself of the favourable circumstances. The French fleet had an actual numerical superiority; Suffren had learnt how to make that superiority still greater.

The wind was from about north-east, and the English fleet was close hauled on the starboard tack; but the four rearmost ships—*Magnanime*, *Isis*, *Hero*, and *Worcester*—were somewhat astern and to leeward of their station. The French commander therefore, directing his four leading ships to engage the van and hold it in check, threw himself, with the rest of his force, on the English centre. The onset was tremendous. Suffren himself in the *Héros*, backed up by the *Orient*, another 74, engaged the *Superb*, the English flag-ship, at close range; afterwards, leaving the *Superb* to other ships as they came up, passed on to the *Monmouth*, the ship ahead, and turned her heavy metal against the little sixty-four. But the *Monmouth*, worthy of her ancient fame, and of the day when, twenty years before, her namesake had, singlehanded, captured the *Foudroyant* of 84

guns, heroically resisted the still greater odds now against her. She, however, suffered terribly, and being reduced almost to a wreck, and unmanageable, shot up into the wind, and was thus thrown into a very prominent position between the two lines. At this critical juncture Sir Edward endeavoured to bring the *Superb* in between her and the French flag-ship; but the *Orient* and *Brillant* interposing, obliged him to pass to leeward, leaving the *Monmouth* still exposed to the fire of the whole French line. Other ships came up; and the battle raged furiously round the little *Monmouth*. The *Héros* lost her fore topmast, and received such other serious damage that Suffren went on board the *Ajax*, where he hoisted his flag. The *Orient's* mizen-topmast was shot away, her mainmast badly wounded, and her mainsail in flames. On the other hand, the *Monmouth* had nothing but the foremast standing; the *Superb* was on fire below, and in both these ships the loss of men was very great. The *Superb* had 59 killed, and 96 wounded; the *Monmouth* 45 killed and 102 wounded. Such loss in the two ships of the English centre shows with what vigour the French attack had been pushed against that particular portion of the line. On the van, they had made no impression; and in the rear, whilst the English ships were to leeward, the French held their wind and took but little part in the action.

About four o'clock, Sir Edward Hughes made the signal to wear, principally, it would seem, because the fleet was getting into shoal water; partly, perhaps, with a wish to bring what remained of his line to windward of the *Monmouth*. The French line endeavoured to follow his example, but in the confusion which the evo-

lution threw them into, Captain Hawker of the *Hero* took the *Monmouth* in tow, and placed her in comparative safety to leeward. The fight continued some time longer, though with slackened fury; and about half-past five, when a violent squall, with heavy rain, came down on the two fleets, the firing ceased as if by mutual consent.

Both fleets anchored for the night, but in a very promiscuous manner; so mixed indeed were they, that M. de Suffren's flag-lieutenant having been sent a message, went, by mistake, on his way back, on board the *Superb*, and was detained as a prisoner. About the same time, the *Fine* was sent to tow the disabled *Héros* off shore, but in the darkness, and in the strength of the storm which was then raging, in attempting to do so, she fell foul of the *Isis*, whose bowsprit passed between her mizen shrouds, the anchor at the same time hooking one of her quarter ports. This caused great confusion in both; neither one nor the other seems to have thought of anything but getting loose, and before they had time to recover their coolness and judgment, a fresh gust of the storm separated the two ships.

In this second engagement, which has been called by the French the battle of Providen, from the small island of that name off which the fleets anchored, the loss on both sides, as well as the damage sustained, was very nearly equal. In men, the English had 137 killed, 430 wounded, and a very large proportion of these on board the two ships *Superb* and *Monmouth*. The French loss is given by M. Chevalier as also 137 killed, 357 wounded, but much more equally distributed. And the morning showed how much the ships had suffered. All that the

respective commanders could do was to alter the position of some of them, so as to bring them into better order. Suffren, then on board the *Ajax*, a ship which had been but slightly engaged, is indeed said to have expressed a wish to fire on the *Isis*, which was anchored within range; but, on its being pointed out to him that this could not lead to any definite result, he gave up the half-formed intention. The story, as told, is very vague and very doubtful. After seven days, however, having refitted as far as possible, he did offer battle, which was not accepted. Sir Edward, anxious to land the stores and troops at Trincomalee, did not consider it prudent further to risk them in the chances of a sea fight, except on his own ground, where an advantageous position might compensate for inferiority of force; he accordingly remained secure in his anchorage, and the French, unwilling to attack him in it, after a parade of their strength, sailed for Batacalo.

During the stay of the two fleets off Providien, the admirals entered into a correspondence relative to a mutual exchange of prisoners. Sir Edward refused to consent to it; either, because, as he alleged, he did not conceive that he had authority to make any such arrangement, or because, as the French insist, he wished to burden the enemy with their maintenance. Suffren, however, was not a man to be burdened in this way. Of resolute will and unflinching determination, when he found that he could not exchange his prisoners, he handed them all over to his ally, Hyder Aly. This was clearly contrary to the custom of civilised war; for whatever the French may pretend, Hyder Aly was in reality a barbarian, and his treatment of his prisoners was such

as might have been expected from his savage nature. At the same time, we must remember that Suffren's resources were extremely limited; and the providing for a large number of useless mouths was a severe tax on his slender stores. The measure which he adopted was politic; was, perhaps, under the circumstances, excusable; but the very fact of having to excuse it, is a sufficient proof that it was not altogether justifiable.

Suffren was undoubtedly a hard man; but in this lies a great part of his merit: a man of a softer and more genial nature, even with equal talents, would have been overwhelmed in the course of the campaign; for it was not merely in battle, and under the flag of England, that he found enemies. Detested by the senior officers of the fleet, who rendered him an unwilling obedience; destitute of all supplies, of all stores,—for the loss of the *Lawriston* was severely felt—he yet, purely by his own unaided energy, was able to keep the fleet in working order, and to make it, almost against its will, fight with something like his own courage and resolution.

The state of things was indeed very bad. It is thus described by M. Trublet, a zealous and experienced officer, at that time first-lieutenant of the *Flamand*:—

‘Scurvy was making frightful ravages in the fleet: 1,500 men suffering from it were landed; the medicines on board the ships had all been used: the capture of the hospital ship had deprived us of all further supply. The country (round *Batacalo*) was unhealthy; and though there was plenty of fish and game; though we obtained, through the Dutch governor, a few wretched bullocks, it was impossible to get either fruit or vegetables, things which are the most powerful, if not the only remedy against the disease. In addition to this, the damage sustained by many of our ships, rendering it necessary

for them to be docked ; our supply of rope exhausted ; the provisions running short ; the crews, sadly diminished in number, overworked ; the certainty of more battles, in which we could not promise ourselves any advantage more decisive than in those which we had fought ;—all these were considerations that threw a dark cloud over our future prospects, and gave rise to the most embarrassing reflections.'

It is no wonder, then, that under these circumstances the fleet was not prepared to sail from Batacalo till 3 June.

On the 5th, Suffren anchored at Tranquebar, where he found some store ships which had been sent by the Dutch from Batavia. He continued there for several days, during which his cruisers were busy at sea, and captured several merchantmen, laden some with rice, some with military stores, but all extremely valuable in the existing want of supplies. From there he moved down to Cuddalore, which had been lately occupied by the French troops ; and sending the flag captain, M. de Moissac, to the camp of Hyder Aly, concerted measures with him for the recapture of Negapatam, a settlement formerly Dutch, which the English had seized on at the first outbreak of the war. In accordance with the scheme then arranged, he took 1,500 soldiers on board the ships, and left Cuddalore on 3 July. He had received intelligence that the English fleet, now come north from Trincomalee, had anchored before Negapatam ; and he left his port, in the full intention of bringing it to action, if necessary, in order to land his troops and to carry on the siege. In this purpose he never wavered, and, when according to his information, he found the English at Negapatam, he at once made the signal to

prepare to anchor with a spring on the cable. In standing in, however, a sudden squall struck the fleet and partially dismasted the Ajax; in the delay that this occasioned, Sir Edward Hughes weighed and stood out to meet them; but M. de Suffren, wishing to give the Ajax time to repair the damage, avoided immediate action, which Sir Edward on his part, did not press. The wind was blowing from the west, and a too eager pursuit of the French might have enabled them to pass to windward of him, and to land troops sufficient to overwhelm the settlement before he could recover his position. This landing it was Sir Edward's object to prevent; and he did prevent it by resolutely keeping his fleet interposed between the French ships and the shore. In this state of things, night closed in. Daylight on the following morning showed little or no change; the fleets were formed in line-of-battle, and about ten o'clock, both being then on the starboard tack, with the wind from south-west, Sir Edward commenced the action, signalling each ship to engage the one abreast, in accordance with Article XIX of the 'Fighting Instructions.'

In many battles at sea during the century the ineffectiveness of this mode of attack had been clearly proved. A ship of the line was in those days so strongly built; her timbers were of such extreme thickness; the guns brought against her, were, in comparison, so feeble, that she could stand very severe pounding in the hull, with but little loss: and by the time that any single antagonist could reduce her to the point of striking, that antagonist was herself so disabled as to be unable to take advantage of her success. There were, no doubt, some exceptions to this rule; but they were very rare,

and, for the most part at least, capable of being explained away. It was the same when ships were pitted one against one, in line of battle, even when the whole line succeeded in getting into action, which was rarely the case. In the late fight off Providien, M. de Suffren had suggested a different method of engaging, which from the danger it occasioned to at least one ship of the English centre, might have persuaded his enemy of its merit. But Sir Edward, though brave, and skilled in his profession after the manner of the old school, was neither by temper nor by genius fitted to receive new ideas ; he, therefore, with all the advantage of the wind, wasted his strength in a dispersed attack on the whole fleet, according to the practice of the former age ; and the result was indecisive, as it always had been when such tactics were followed.

The firing, was, however, kept up with great spirit on both sides, and both fleets suffered severely ; so much so that when, about half-past twelve, the wind suddenly shifted to the south-east, and the respective ships, first taken aback, were brought round in a confused manner with their heads to the westward, neither one nor the other was anxious to recommence an engagement which did not seem likely to attain any further end : the English took up their former position off Negapatam ; and the French, having been unable to effect their proposed landing, returned the next day to Cuddalore.

It was during the confusion consequent on the sudden shift of wind in this battle, that the *Sevère*, a French 64, came for a few minutes into very close action with the Sultan, and struck her flag. The *Sevère* had not sustained any great loss either in men or rigging ; she was

perfectly able to continue the fight; and no explanation of the circumstance can be offered but that given by M. Trublet, whose account presents such a remarkable phase of human nature, and is so singularly opposed to all our ideas of professional pride, and of the courage which springs from education, that we should have been tempted to reject it as impossible, were it not amply confirmed by official testimony,¹ as well as being the deliberate testimony of one actually present, and whose bias might be supposed to tend rather the opposite way. His account is this:—

‘ The conduct of M. de Cillart, whilst in command of the *Bellone*, had given rise to grave doubts of his courage; but in this campaign, his weakness had hitherto been kept a secret on board his own ship; for as he had been prudent enough to leave the management of her, on important occasions, to his officers, the ship had on the whole done well. In the present instance, however, the two officers on whom he depended had been carried below wounded. Left to himself, this weak-minded man lost his head, in the heat of the action, to such an extent that, without reflecting on the shame and disgrace which he heaped on himself and which he threw on his country, in presence of the whole French fleet, he made up his mind to surrender himself to the enemy: he ordered the flag to be struck. Two auxiliary officers (*blues*),² to whom he gave the order, refused to execute it; but some others of the crew to whom he repeated it, were cowardly enough to obey: the captain meanwhile demanding quarter by the most unmistakeable gestures. When this was made known below, one of the officers, a M. Dieu, rushed up on deck, and after vainly endeavouring to make the captain ashamed of his cowardice, he declared to him that he and the other officers would not share in his disgrace; that they considered the flag

¹ Trublet, p. 113, *Chevalier*, p. 422.

² See *post*, p. 256.

in such hands a mere trumpery rag, that they would not surrender to the enemy, and that they were going to continue the action. Accordingly, the fire which had ceased for some minutes was reopened with increased vigour. It was unfortunately at this moment that the *Sultan*, which had hove to, lowered a boat in order to take possession of the *Sevère*; she thus sustained considerable loss, and was compelled to fill and stand on. It was noticed at the time by the several ships of the fleet that the *Sevère's* ensign was not flying; but it was supposed that the halliards had been shot away, and that they were too busy on board to repair the damage. It was not till after the fleet anchored at Cuddalore, that the disgraceful truth became known.'

There were, however, several other captains in the fleet whose misconduct deservedly called down on them M. de Suffren's displeasure. Three of these were sent home; but even this severe step was not sufficient to quell the spirit of insubordination which had manifested itself; it checked it indeed for a time, but only that it might break out again in a more resolute and dangerous manner.

Notwithstanding the great difficulties which Suffren had to contend with, he worked most energetically at Cuddalore to get the fleet ready for sea. In the long campaign, and in three hard-fought battles, the ships had sustained damages which it was impossible thoroughly to repair without large stores and the conveniences of a dockyard. These were not to be had. The voice of discontent was loud in the fleet, pressing for an immediate return to the Isle of France. Rather than abandon the coast, said Suffren, I will sink the ships in the very roadstead of Madras. He determined that the ships should be repaired, and he carried that determination

into effect by the mere force of his will. The requisite timber was obtained on shore, often by pulling down houses and converting the beams. For other purposes, other makeshifts were adopted; and on 1 August the fleet sailed for Batacalo, where the commodore expected to find some reinforcements and stores lately arrived from Europe.

It was at Batacalo, whilst waiting for these to come on from Point de Galle, that, on 19 August, he received a complimentary letter from the Grand Master of Malta, conferring on him the dignity, and enclosing the insignia of Bailiff, or Grand Cross of the Order. This is the more noteworthy, as, notwithstanding the honours that were afterwards lavished on him by the King of France, it is by this title of Bailiff that his name is, in France, almost invariably distinguished.

Sir Edward Hughes was meanwhile refitting at Madras, and such was his carelessness as to intelligence, that he did not learn positively, till the 16th, that the French had left Cuddalore. The frigate *Coventry*, which met the *Bellone* off Batacalo on the 12th, and engaged her in a running fight until close in with the fleet, brought him the first news. The governor of Madras had, indeed, sent him word, some days before, of their having gone to the southward, and had pressed him to sail, in order to prevent any operations against Negapatam or Trincomalee; but he had chosen to doubt the information, and had answered that he was in no way responsible to the governor for the management of the fleet. Alarmed, too late, for the safety of Trincomalee, Sir Edward now hurried his preparations, and sailed from Madras on the 20th. Baffling winds made his

passage unusually long, and he did not arrive off Trincomalee till 2 September. The place had surrendered to the French two days before.

Acting with characteristic energy, Suffren, after being joined by the reinforcements at Batacalo on 21 August, appeared off Trincomalee on the 25th; on the 26th landed the troops which had just joined him, as well as others specially embarked at Cuddalore and Batacalo, and a considerable part of the ship's companies; pushed the works vigorously on the 27th and 28th; opened fire on the 29th; on the 30th summoned the fort; agreed hurriedly to all the demands of the governor, Captain Hay Macdowal, relative to the honours of war; and took possession on the 31st. Two days after, when the English fleet was signalled in the offing, he was at liberty to re-embark his men, and prepare to meet his old enemy at sea.

Sir Edward Hughes did not discover the loss he had sustained till the next morning, when, as he was within five or six miles of the shore, Suffren hoisted the French flag. The surprise was so great that he recoiled, as it were, from the unexpected contact, and stood out to sea. Suffren followed, resolved, apparently, to complete his conquest by a victory over the English fleet, for his superiority in force had been made greater than ever, by the addition of two ships and large numbers of men. But the captains of his fleet were opposed to the idea. They had fought often enough, they said; they could not conquer the enemy, whose resources were inexhaustible, and whose strength in the end would be overwhelming; the whole fleet ought to return to the Isle of France; and if the fleet did not go, they themselves would

demand permission to retire. It is difficult to understand how a man of Suffren's harsh disposition and unyielding temper could tolerate such language from his subordinates. Some of them were, as captains, senior to himself, and this may have occasioned a delicacy in his behaviour towards them, which he would not otherwise have felt necessary. It is possible, too, that family connections, or court interest, may have prevented him from exercising the severe justice which the laws of strict discipline demanded, or he may have found a dearth of officers qualified to fill the places which would become vacant; but whatever may have been the cause of his leniency, he was content to expostulate.

It was then under such unfavourable circumstances—with the higher officers of the fleet in a state bordering on open mutiny—that Suffren sailed out to attack the English. He had, however, the advantage of the wind from south-west, which gave him again an opportunity of essaying his new tactics. The English line was formed on the starboard tack, heading about south-east, and the French admiral made a general signal to engage its rear. He had fifteen ships against the English twelve, and his idea was to throw the whole of this superiority, at close range, on the sternmost ships, leaving, at most, an equal force to hold the van in check. But the ill-will of some of the captains, and the lubberly, unseamanlike conduct of others, completely frustrated his plan. His signals were not obeyed; his line of battle was never formed; the ships engaged in an independent and isolated manner—some within pistol shot, where they sustained considerable damage, as the flag-ship, the *Illustre* and the *Ajax*; some almost out of range, where they suffered

little or no loss, as the *Annibal*, the *Sevère*, the *Orient*, and the *Sphinx*; others more or less closely, but without that hearty and zealous co-operation so necessary to ensure success. In this irregular way the battle continued for about three hours, when the wind shifted to east-south-east. This brought the English fleet more on an equality as regarded position; but it was too inferior in numbers, the enemy had too many ships quite fresh to permit it to become the assailant. Three French ships, which had borne the brunt of the battle, had suffered severely; in men, their loss was 64 killed and 178 wounded, out of a total of 82 and 255; the *Héros* had lost her mainmast; the *Illustre*, her mizenmast and maintopmast; but twelve ships still remained practically untouched, to put a good face on the backward movement which the Bailiff was compelled to make. The firing ceased at dark; the English unable to press their enemy, the French unwilling to do anything but get back into Trincomalee. This, however, they effected with difficulty. Although but a short distance from their port, they were dead to leeward of it, and to beat up with their crippled ships was a work of time. They did not arrive off the harbour till the evening of the 6th, when, owing to the ignorance and inexperience of the officer of the watch, the *Orient*, carried by the currents which prevail at that season, grounded heavily on the reef that stretches out from Foul Point. She was an old slup, launched at L'Orient in 1756, and was so damaged that she could not be got off. Her masts, however, might have served for the disabled ships; but the most important, the mainmast, destined for the *Héros*, was, by the unskilfulness of the officer in charge, broken short

off at the level of the upper deck, and rendered quite useless.

Suffren felt deeply the cowardly and traitorous disaffection of the captains under him in this action. He felt that through it he had missed what would have been the crowning glory of his campaign ; that with the superior force, and the advantage of position, he had had a chance of breaking the power of the English, a chance of—as he wrote a few months later—destroying Sir Edward Hughes, and remaining master of India. We, of course, looking from a different point of view, may hold a different opinion ; we may think that he had no better chance of annihilating the British fleet on 3 September than he had on the previous occasions, when with a more united force he vainly attempted it ; but we can nevertheless understand the bitter disappointment he experienced at not being allowed to try, when circumstances were externally so favourable to him.

It was, therefore, impossible that things could remain unchanged. Four captains were sent to the Isle of France ; among the number was M. de Tromelin, of the *Annibal*, the senior captain in the fleet, and as such, the leader of the cabal against the commander-in-chief. The vacancies were filled up from the frigates and corvettes, to which in turn some of the subordinate officers were promoted. Amongst these we find a name afterwards well known in naval history, that of M. Villaret de Joyeuse, who some years later commanded the Republican fleet in the battle off Ushant.

In refitting and reorganising the fleet, the month of September passed away. It was 1 October before the French left Trincomalee, and the season was then so

broken that it was advisable to seek winter quarters. During the northerly monsoon the east coast of India is so exposed that Suffren had some time before resolved to go to Sumatra; he accordingly now carried this resolve into execution, visiting on his way the several stations on the Coromandel coast. At Cuddalore, the *Bizarre*, a 64-gun ship, was run ashore by the carelessness and incapacity of her captain, M. de Trehouret, one of the late promotions. M. de Trehouret was afterwards placed on the retired list, as a punishment for his fault; but the ship was irrecoverably lost, and even her spars, and such of her stores as could be saved, being put on board a Dutch transport, were, with her, captured by the *Medea* a few months later. The fleet left the coast on 15 October, and on 1 November arrived at Achen, in Sumatra, where it remained during the bad season. The English fleet left Madras on the same day, forced to sea by a hurricane that swept over the roadstead, and caused most terrible destruction. A great number of country ships, laden with provisions, went down at anchor, and the direct consequence of the loss was a famine which carried off thousands of the inhabitants. And the fleet also suffered very seriously. The *Superb* and *Exeter* were completely dismasted, and for some hours were rolling about, the mere sport of the waves, and in momentary danger of foundering. The admiral moved for the time to the Sultan, and the two ships, finally made Bombay, jury-rigged. It was the middle of December before all the fleet had reached that port. They were here reinforced by a squadron of five ships of the line, under Commodore Sir Richard Bickerton, in the *Gibraltar*,¹ a fine 80-gun

¹ Formerly the *Phoenix*, flag-ship of Don Juan de Langara, and was

ship, which had been taken from the Spaniards two years before, and this addition raised them to a number greater than that of the French under the Bailiff de Suffren; the more so, by reason of the loss of the two ships, *Orient* and *Bizarre*. Accordingly, Sir Edward felt in a position to act more vigorously, and with ships repaired and men refreshed, put to sea on 20 March, 1783.

The French fleet had enjoyed no such good fortune during the winter. It had remained at Achen for a couple of months, where it had indeed been able somewhat to recruit the health of the men, as well as to refit the ships to a certain extent, limited by the very scanty allowance of stores,* but the impatience of the Bailiff was too great to permit him to stay there longer than was absolutely necessary. He left Achen on 20 December, and did not arrive at Cuddalore till the beginning of February, having spent nearly two months in a desultory cruise in the Bay of Bengal, and in a few abortive attempts on some of the scattered English stations. He was recalled to the coast of Coromandel by a rumour of the death of Hyder Aly. The intelligence was doubtful, but it was of too great importance for him not immediately to inquire into it; for if Hyder's son did not hold the same views as to the war, did not entertain the same friendly disposition towards the French as his father had done, things might go hard with their forces, by sea as well as by land. On his arrival at Cuddalore, he was reassured. The news was correct; Hyder Aly had died on 7 December; but the son, Tippoo Sahib, had inherited the policy and the martial spirit of the father. He

captured by Sir George Rodney off Cape St. Vincent, on the night of 16 January, 1780.

readily renewed the agreement with the French, and furnished them with a supply of the requisite provisions; so that Suffren, satisfied on the score of the native alliance, sailed in a few days for Trincomalee, where he received the news of his confirmation in the rank of *chef d'escadre*, and was joined, on 10 March, by a large reinforcement fresh from Europe and the Isle of France. Three ships of the line, a frigate, and a liberal supply of stores qualified the fleet for the approaching campaign; whilst a considerable number of soldiers (2,500), formed a force that when joined to the troops already in the South of India, and co-operating with the native army, would be very formidable. Fortunately, however, the command of this force had been given to M. de Bussy, an officer who had fought his way to fame and wealth more than twenty years before, as a contemporary and rival of Lally, but who was now old, luxurious, and unenterprising; more fortunately, because on the death of Sir Eyre Coote, on 26 April, the command of the English army devolved on Major-General Stuart, a man who—whatever his talent—showed himself more eager to uphold his personal claims, as against the civil power in the Presidency, than to wage a single-hearted war for the good of the country. Against such, a bolder leader than De Bussy might have achieved some fatal success.

The French troops were landed about 20 March, at Porto Novo; Suffren, with part of the fleet escorting them there, and covering the disembarkation. As Sir Edward Hughes was daily expected to return to the east coast, he was anxious to get back to Trincomalee, and reunite his forces; but the absence of the flying squadron delayed him, and it was 7 April before he could leave

Porto Novo. He was only just in time. As he entered the Bay of Trincomalee, the English fleet was seen passing at some distance to seaward.

Left to himself, to his own want of energy, and the ineptitude of dissolute favourites, De Bussy frittered away his time and resources. Having resolved not to undertake any active operations against the English army, he took up a strong position at Cuddalore; in front of which General Stuart, after many delays, arrived on 7 June. The English fleet had meantime possession of the coast. Many of the French ships were in such a wretched state—some of them needing the pumps constantly going, in order to be kept afloat—that it was not possible to leave Trincomalee without a thorough repair. De Suffren, feeling how much his presence was called for, pushed on the work with the energy of despair; but under any circumstances, even far more favourable than those which attended him, heaving down several line-of-battle ships requires time, and De Bussy's messages, pressing him to come to the northward, could not be obeyed. Sir Edward Hughes was thus able to enforce a rigid blockade of the coast without opposition; and though he was a good deal distressed for want of water, he had sufficient strength to permit of his keeping an adequate squadron cruising off Cuddalore, and from that as far south as Porto Novo: so that when General Stuart closed the land communications, the French troops were exposed to all the deprivations of a siege.

The strength of the English fleet was, however, to a great extent, a hollow show; for such virulent scurvy raged throughout, that the ships were scarcely more than half-manned. In the beginning of June, upwards of a

thousand men were sent to hospital at Madras, and notwithstanding this, a few days later, the sick lists of the different ships mounted, on the average, to about a hundred. The efficiency of the fleet was thus much impaired, but it still continued at sea. On 24 May it was off Trincomalee, and perhaps meditated an attack on the ships in the outer anchorage; but on closer observation Sir Edward judged that they were posted too strongly to permit such an attempt to be made. He therefore stood to the southward, hoping to pick up some French store-ships, supposed to be in the neighbourhood; but returned in a few days, and resumed his former cruising ground between Cuddalore and Porto Novo.*

It was at this time that Suffren wrote to M. de Soult, governor of the Isle of France, the following letter, which gives a tolerably clear idea of his view of his position:—

‘I cannot make out what Sir Edward Hughes’s plan is. Does he expect reinforcements; is he looking out for those which we expect; or is he waiting till I go to the relief of Cuddalore to attack Trincomalee, which he would capture easily, as I am obliged to take away five hundred of the garrison in order that my ships may be—I cannot say manned, but capable of going at all? Persuaded then that with fifteen ships, of which eight only are coppered, I cannot attack seventeen which are all coppered, and stronger than mine, which have the advantage of the wind, and, owing to their superior sailing, can keep it, persuaded also that they have left their eighteenth ship, with some frigates, blockading Cuddalore, I have sent two transports laden with provisions and stores, in convoy of the *Fendant*, *Cléopâtre* and *Coventry*. I believe that this is the surest way to relieve Cuddalore, without at the same time risking Trincomalee, on which our existence in Indian waters depends.’

On 11 June the French left Trincomalee. Although still believing himself inferior in force to the English, ignorant as he was of the fearful sickness which was making such havoc amongst our crews, Suffren nevertheless felt that an energetic effort must be made to relieve Cuddalore, or rather the French army, whose very being, as such, depended on the safety of the fort, now hard pressed. On the 13th, a series of vigorous attacks, obstinately resisted by the garrison, ended in its being driven within the walls. The next day the French fleet appeared in the offing.

Sir Edward Hughes, in consequence of the arrival of the enemy, moved tip off Cuddalore, while the French anchored some miles to the southward. Suffren had, however, resolved to relieve the place, if possible, at all hazards. He accordingly weighed on the 17th, and stood boldly in, as if to attack the English in their anchorage. Sir Edward went out to meet him, forming line of battle in expectation of immediate action; but the Bailiff's first object was to establish a free communication with the besieged town, and to accomplish this end he manœuvred during the whole day. By the evening he had passed, with his whole fleet, inside the English, and was able to anchor close in shore. This gave him the wished-for opportunity of filling up his ships' companies with men from the garrison; he borrowed no less than 1,200, half of whom were Europeans, and at once distributed them through the fleet; the crews were thus raised rather above their complement; whilst those of the English, reduced by sickness and death, were far below it. The next day, he weighed again, and having the advantage of the wind, was eager to engage; but Sir Edward,

manceuvring for the weather gage, refused the proffered battle.

During the whole of the 18th and 19th, the English admiral vainly endeavoured to recover the advantage which he had allowed to be taken from him. On the 20th the relative position of the two fleets was but little altered; but Sir Edward, weary of manœuvring, and perhaps somewhat out of temper at the idea that he had been outwitted, made up his mind to fight. He accordingly hove to, in line of battle, on the port tack, the wind being almost due west, and received the onset of the enemy, who opened fire a little after four o'clock.

The action continued from that time till dark; but without the energy of spirit which had distinguished former actions between the same admirals. Owing to a recent order from France, issued consequently on the capture of Count de Grasse, in the *Ville de Paris*, the year before, Suffren hoisted his flag in the *Cléopâtre*, and took no personal share in the battle; and, whether mistrusting his unskilled and motley crews, composed to a very large extent of soldiers, Sepoys, Lascars, Cingalese, and negroes, or from some other cause which we cannot now guess at, he did not attempt to repeat his former tactics. This is the more curious as, before sailing from Trincomalee, he had, for the first time, reduced his attack to a system, and had given out an order of battle, according to which his five 74-gun ships were to form the rear of the line and were to double on the rear of the enemy, whilst the rest of the fleet, in very open order, were to stretch along and occupy the English line.¹ As matter of fact, however, the whole French fleet extended

¹ M. Chevalier says (p 465): 'This order of battle had been signalled

along and to windward of the English; which, on its side, was too weak from the late enormous loss of men by sickness, to do more than maintain its ground till night closed in.

This put an end to the combat. The loss in killed was almost exactly equal; that of the English was 108, of the French 102; but Sir Edward, by withdrawing to Madras, thus raising the blockade of Cuddalore, must undoubtedly be considered as having admitted the inferiority of his force.

General Stuart might thus have found himself in a position of great danger had his opponent possessed more force of character; but while Suffren was endeavouring to stimulate M. de Bussy into taking the offensive, news arrived, 29 June, of the cessation of hostilities, and the war terminated without either of the opposing forces having been able to gain over the other any advantage that could be considered at all decisive.

The account, necessarily somewhat detailed, which I have given of the campaign extending over a year and a half, and of the battles fought by the fleets, will put the relative merits of the two commanders and of the forces under them, in a clearer light than any mere expression of opinion. By this account we are led to the conclusion that in state policy, or in naval tactics, Suffren was alike the superior genius. Distinguished above his adversary by energy of character, by a burning zeal which considered little done so long as anything remained to be done; a man of infinite resource, of perfect self-confidence, and yet knowing how to conciliate the civil and

on 14 and 15 June: on the 20th, the circumstances probably did not permit the application of this method of attack.'

military authorities, even whilst he differed from them in opinion—it might well be asked how it happened that his campaign was not more successful, and that his labours were so fruitless. The cause of this is clear. Superior to Sir Edward Hughes in most of the qualifications of a naval commander, he was not so in the one great essential; Sir Edward, though opinionated, perverse, with but little idea of tactics and less of policy, was still at all times ready for battle; he did not know much about manœuvring a fleet, but he could handle his individual ship to admiration; he had not much judgment as to the proper time or place to fight, but when he did fight, he did so with a courage that was proof against all odds. In this he was splendidly seconded by the captains under him. According to all rule, the Exeter off Sadras, or the Monmouth off Providien, ought to have struck; but they did not strike; nor does the idea of striking appear to have suggested itself to either Commodore King or Captain Alms as even a possibility. Theoretically they were beaten; as a matter of fact, and in a matter-of-fact way, they kept their flag flying till the end of the battle. There was no attempt at theatrical display. They did not, as M. de Suffren is said to have done when his masts went by the board in the battle of 3 September, stamp on the deck in a transport of rage, or cry, in a tone of exaltation, ‘Bring flags, bring all the flags on board! hang them all round the ship!’ but they took the heaviest pounding that the enemy could give, with the understanding, probably, that it was part of the day’s work.

With the French it was very different. Notwithstanding the brilliant example which their courageous admiral set them, the captains of the fleet were, with few

exceptions, resolute in hanging back in the hour of danger. We by no means specially refer to the very extraordinary case, already related, of the captain of the *Sevère*, in the battle of Negapatam; the conduct of M. de Cillart is beyond the pale of criticism; but a want of energy, a lukewarmness, a slackness in action—which may have been spite and jealousy, but which savours strongly of cowardice—was the rule amongst the superior officers of the fleet. The *Ajax*, on the evening of 5 July, lost her main and mizen topmasts in a squall; though in presence of the enemy, though a battle the next day might almost certainly be counted on, nothing was done on board to repair the damage; the *Ajax* the next morning was in the same disabled state as on the previous evening, and her captain, M. Bouvet, had the unblushing assurance to make a signal for permission to part company. The permission was refused; but the *Ajax* lay to leeward of the fleet, and took no share in the action. That Bouvet was a very old man and in bad health is all that his friends seem able to allege in his behalf. On 12 April, the *Vengeur* and *Artésien* persistently disobeyed the signal, several times repeated, to close on the enemy. The same two ships rendered themselves conspicuous on 6 July, by a similar disobedience of signals, and their captains, De Forbin and De Maurville, were in consequence sent to the Isle of France, under arrest; family interest, it would appear, saved them from further punishment. M. de Tromelin, commanding the *Annibal*, the senior captain in the fleet, was notoriously the soul of a party against Suffren; and the disgraceful and unsailorlike conduct of several of the other captains in the battle of 3 September was principally

due to his machinations ; but the insubordinate jealousy of their senior by no means absolves the others. In all this there is one circumstance especially remarkable : it is that none of these mutineers was visited with the penalties of martial law. In the history of our own navy, we find a very close parallel in the West Indian campaign of Vice-Admiral Benbow in 1702. I am by no means sure that, morally, a large part of the blame does not rest on Benbow,¹ whilst Suffren seems to be clear ; but of the captains implicated in that scandalous affair off Santa Marta, two suffered capital punishment ; one escaped the same only by an earlier death ; and a fourth was dismissed the service, and imprisoned during the Queen's pleasure. Of the many in M. de Suffren's fleet who were guilty of cowardice, disaffection, and disobedience, only one—De Cillart—was cashiered.

Such painful considerations, however, tend to raise the French admiral's credit to a higher pitch. When we reflect that men of all creeds, and of all nationalities, freemen or slaves, often in want of provisions, of medicines and of military stores, formed the crews of ships many of which were so rotten that they could only be kept afloat by continual pumping ; that such crews were commanded by cowardly and mutinous captains, and officered by inexperienced or ignorant lieutenants, we cease to wonder how it was that, with a force numerically so imposing, so little was accomplished ; we begin rather to admire the genius of the man who, under such difficulties, could accomplish so much. What he did accomplish was this : by his bold and daring behaviour he won on the natives to continue against us the war which

¹ See *Dictionary of National Biography*, s.n. Benbow, John, iv. 210

they had been on the point of abandoning; he conciliated Hyder Aly in a personal interview to such an extent that that wily old barbarian lent himself heart and soul to the furtherance of the admiral's plans and of the French interest, as indissolubly wrapped up with his own, he captured Trincomalee by a skilful combination of craft, strategy, and force; and he fought an action in defence of his capture, which, under all disadvantages, put it out of the enemy's power to undertake any operations against his new possession. He relieved Cuddalore from a blockade which must, if continued, have caused the ruin of the army; and in doing so placed the French general in a position to carry on an offensive war.

This much he did; but we cannot assent to the exaggerated statements of French writers that he gained great naval victories. Gaining a naval victory does not consist in allowing an inferior force to stand firmly at bay till nightfall, and at the close of the action to take up an impregnable position; but this was the case in the battle of Providien. Gaining a naval victory does not consist in allowing an inferior force to cut off convoy, to capture a transport and the hospital ship, under the very eyes of the fleet, and to carry off the prizes after an action fought to retake them; but this was the case in the battle of Sadras: nor in being driven from the manifest purpose of landing troops and prosecuting enterprises on shore, as happened at Negapatam. Such actions, well fought as they undoubtedly were—at least, on the part of the commander-in-chief—were not victories in any sense of the word, and to style them such, far from increasing, tends to lessen the glory of the admiral; for to speak of these, or of the battles of Providien, of

Trincomalee, or Cuddalore as victories, carries with it, to our ears, an appearance of unfitness that borders on the absurd—to our ears, accustomed to the name of victory as belonging to such battles as La Hogue, Vigo, Quiberon Bay, or Dominica, not to carry the glorious roll-call into the wars of the Revolution.

The court of France, however, formed a much higher estimate of the services of the Bailiff de Suffren. He had already, in March 1783, on the news of his first three battles, been raised to the rank of *lieutenant-général*, though—during the war, at least—he remained ignorant of his promotion.¹ On his arrival at Toulon on 26 March, 1784, he hastened to Paris, where he received the greatest possible consideration from Louis XVI. The Queen herself presented him to the Dauphin, as one of the best servants of the King. ‘Learn my son,’ she said, ‘to pronounce properly the names of the heroes, the defenders of their country.’² He was, shortly afterwards—although there was no vacancy—created Vice-Admiral of France, and an extraordinary chapter of the order of Saint-Esprit was held, that he might be enrolled among its knights. He was the hero of the day, cheered by the crowd whenever he appeared in public, and everywhere received with the highest honour and distinction.

¹ It is worth calling attention to this, as illustrating what is said in Chapter VIII, on the subject of French naval rank in the last century. M. de Suffren, whilst commanding a fleet of from twelve to fifteen sail of the line, was, during the greater part of the time, so far as he knew, merely a captain having local rank, and through the whole campaign wore only a broad pennant. His enemy, Sir Edward Hughes, holding a corresponding command, was a vice-admiral.

² It may be interesting to note that the Provençal and accepted pronunciation of the name is as if written Suffrein; which may perhaps account for the persistency with which, in this country, it has been misspelt.

He did not live long to enjoy his popularity and ran. A very few years after, during a cloud on the politic horizon of Europe, he was appointed to the command of a fleet ordered, as a measure of precaution, to be fitted out at Brest, and was on the point of leaving Paris, when he suddenly died, on 8 December, 1788. About his death there is some mystery. He had been in his usual health, and had been working with his accustomed energy in forwarding the equipment of the fleet. His sudden death was, at the time, attributed to a fit of apoplexy and his extreme corpulence would suggest that there was nothing improbable in such a story. Various French writers, however, consider that there is satisfactory evidence that he was killed in a duel, provoked by the Prince de Mirepoix, on account of his having, whilst at the East Indies, put two of the prince's nephews under arrest and turned them out of the service. The witness whose testimony is adduced was a servant of Suffren at the time, and his story, related by M. Cunat as well as by Jal in minute detail, is plausible enough. It is, however, quite uncorroborated; and the sudden death of distinguished men has so often led to a variety of contradictory reports—as though the world strove to separate, even the manner of dying, the hero from the common herd—that we should be careful how, even on such a point, which little importance attaches, we yield a too ready belief to what may have been merely the monomaniacal idea of a very old man.

But whatever was the cause of his death—whether apoplexy or the sword—the loss to France was equally severe. Had he lived, the next few years might have been very different for his country. A man of keen fo-

sight and unclouded judgment, he might have obtained the adoption of measures of sound policy and necessary concession. A man of undoubted probity, his word might have been accepted by a populace that put no faith in the promises of the court, or in the pledges of the king. A man of unscrupulous determination, his prompt and vigorous action might have quelled in its very cradle the young rebellion, which weak and timorous opposition fostered to such a gigantic and terrible growth.

And, though the estimate I have formed of his character is in some respects less high than that which has been formed by his own countrymen, I yield a ready assent to the opinion that—cool and daring in action, crafty in policy, of ready wit, and of singular genius as a tactician, with much practical skill, added to a vast fund of theoretical knowledge—the Bailiff de Suffren was one of the most dangerous enemies that the English fleets have ever met, and, without exception, the most illustrious officer that has ever held command in the French navy.

CHAPTER V.

*TEGETTHOFF.*EXPERIENCES OF STEAM AND ARMOUR.¹

THERE is a certain tendency in the minds of those who are most earnest in the cause of naval education to confuse the means with the end, and to imagine that all that is wanted is a competent knowledge of such sciences as mathematics, physics, geography, astronomy, navigation even, or pilotage, gunnery or naval architecture. In reality, and so far as the duties of a naval officer are concerned, all these are but branches, however important, each in its different degree, of that one science, the art of war, which it is the business of his life to practise. From this point of view, the *raison d'être* of a ship of war is her power of fighting; that of her captain is the skill to use that power. The captain of a ship of war is therefore called on to possess not merely the skill of the navigator, of the seaman, of the engineer, of the gunner, or nowadays of the electrician, but of all together, directed by the knowledge of how and when to use each to the best advantage so as to attain the desired end. As a matter of first necessity, young officers are specially

¹ *Fraser's Magazine*, June, 1878.

instructed in the details of those several branches, a knowledge of each of which must be joined together in the perfect commander ; but it is not by that detailed instruction alone that they become fitted for the duties which promotion will lay on them. Where the official instruction ends, the higher education really begins. From that time it is the man's own experience, and reading, and thought, and judgment, which must fit him for the requirements of higher rank.

It is a trite proverb that experience teaches even fools. But needful personal experience is not always to be had, or the cost of its lessons may be ruinous. The wise man will learn from the experience of others : and just as a naval officer learns navigation from the theories and practice of centuries, embodied in his Inman or his Raper ; or as he learns seamanship from the traditions of old, whether handed down by word of mouth or recorded by Darcy Lever, or Boyd, or Nares ; so also will he learn the art of commanding ships or fleets from the history of his great predecessors, of what they have done, and how they have done it. But this is a higher and graver study than all that has gone before. Certain fixed rules can be laid down for observing the sun or for regulating the chronometers. The different points of seamanship are learned and understood by the average boatswain as well as by his commanding officer. A given battery will send an electric current through a known resistance. Steam at a given pressure will drive the ship at a known speed ; and the measures necessary for obtaining that pressure and that speed are acquired by hundreds. But the science of war is not one of mere rule and precedent, for changing conditions change

almost every detail, and that too in a manner which it is often impossible to foresee.

The commanding officer who hopes to win, not merely to tumble into distinction, must therefore be prepared beforehand for every eventuality. The knowledge of what has happened already will not only teach him by precedent; so far as that is possible, it is easy. and within the compass of everyday abilities: it will also suggest to him things that have never yet been done; things in the planning of which he may rise to the height of genius, in the executing of which he may rise to the height of grandeur. And it is in this way that the exact story of difficulties overcome, of brave defence or brilliant achievement, interesting in itself as a story of gallantry or heroism, becomes, to the naval officer, a study of real and technical importance.

As a contribution to such a study I am going to relate the story of the battle of Lissa, a battle of our own time, the only battle between armoured squadrons; a battle which Captain Colomb¹ has aptly described as 'beyond all bounds the most important naval occurrence since Trafalgar,' and yet a battle of which—in this country at least—little or nothing is accurately known. There is scarcely an incident in it that is not every day misrepresented, and even the name of the victorious admiral is almost invariably misspelt.² This is not very satisfactory: to us, as a nation supposed to be the nursery

¹ *Journal of the United Service Institution*, vol. xi p. 104.

² The misspellings show considerable ingenuity. Starting with the data that its consonants are t, g, f, and a doubtful h, these have been arranged by ones or twos, in almost every possible combination. Tegethoff, Tegetoff, Teggetoff, Teghetoff, are only some of the many ways that have come under my notice.

and the storehouse of naval science and naval tradition, it is not very creditable.

Wilhelm, the son of Lieutenant-Colonel Karl von Tegetthoff, was born at Marburg in Styria on 23 December, 1827. We are, as yet, told nothing of his childhood, except that he spent some of it in the Gymnasium at Marburg; but at the age of thirteen he was sent to the College for Naval Cadets at Venice. There he stayed for five years: he was nearly eighteen when he made his first experience of sea-service. On 23 July, 1845, he was appointed to the Montecuccoli brig, and afterwards to the corvette *Adria*, on board which ships, whilst cruising in the Adriatic and Archipelago, he learned the more practical part of his duties. On 27 January, 1848, he was made an ensign of the second class, and was raised to the first class three months later, on 18 April.

The Austrian navy was at this period a service of extremely small importance, either from a national or political point of view. It was feeble; it was neglected by the government, and every kreuzer spent on it was grudged. In the interior of the country it was scarcely known that there was a navy at all. The officers were, almost to a man, natives of the Italian provinces; the few Germans amongst them—sons of government officials civil or military, whose rank and position gave them an opportunity of pushing forward their relations in a service where competition was not keen—had either to assimilate themselves to their Italian comrades, or to lead a life of solitude or seclusion. In Venice the fleet was openly spoken of as belonging to the Italian nation, and ‘Young Italy’ counted many of its warmest sup-

porters on board the Austrian ships of war. The two Bandieras, chiefs of the rising of 1844, who had been shot at Cosenza, were naval officers, a lieutenant and an ensign, and the sons of a naval officer, an admiral. Of the seven who were executed with them one other, Moro, was also an officer of the navy. They had tampered, on a large scale, with the fidelity of the seamen, and they had all but made themselves masters of the *Bellona* frigate. These were things of public notoriety, and those Austrians who knew that a navy did exist, connected their idea of it principally with the memory of convicted traitors; an idea which afterwards seemed to be justified by the fact that when the war of 1848 broke out, and Venice threw off the Austrian yoke, most of the naval officers flung in their lot with the revolutionary cause. In doing so, however, they failed to secure the ships. These were still held by the Austrians, but were for the time useless, as the few officers that remained were insufficient in number, and the Sardinian fleet, mistress of the Adriatic, prevented all attempts at re-organisation. It was not till the Sardinians, after their defeat at Novara (23 March, 1849), and the pressure thus brought on Piedmont by land, were compelled to withdraw their ships, that the Austrian navy could show signs of life, and was able with the few ships they could fit out, to close the blockade of Venice, which finally surrendered on 22 August, 1849.

During the early part of this period of enforced inactivity, Tegetthoff was an ensign on board, one after the other, the brig *Montecuccoli*, the brig *Triest*, and the frigate *Bellona*, where, at best, he was but perfecting himself in habits of discipline, and in the knowledge of

the internal economy of ships of war. He was afterwards aide-de-camp of Field-Marshal Martini, the then head of the navy, and went with him in his embassy to Naples; but returned in time to take his share of the blockading on board his old ship *Adria*. After the peace he served on board the steamer *Maria Anna* in the Levant, and was present in the *Peiræus* during the English blockade of that port on account of the *Don Pacifico* affair, now almost forgotten, or remembered only by Sir George Dasent's clever skit.¹ He was promoted on 4 June, 1851, to the rank of lieutenant of the second class, and on 4 November, 1852, to the first class, in which grade he served again on board the *Montecuccoli* and the corvette *Carolina*, and in 1854 was appointed to command the schooner *Elisabeth*, from which shortly afterwards he was transferred to the steamer *Taurus*.

These rapid changes speak of the disorganised and unsettled condition in which the Austrian navy was at the time. The ships were there, though in bad state, but the officers were very few, and seem to have been transferred from one to the other, either at the caprice of the authorities, or in accordance with the necessities of the dockyard. In command of the *Taurus*, however, Tegetthoff remained for some time, employed, during the Crimean war, in a sort of police duty in the Sulina mouth of the Danube. This duty was neither pleasant nor easy, and Tegetthoff not only gained credit by the way in which he performed it, but was brought to the favourable notice of the Archduke Maximilian.

After the general break-up in 1848, and the disappearance of the overwhelming Italian element, the

¹ *Jest and Earnest*, vol. ii. p. 110.

navy seems to have become suddenly popular. Many officers from North Germany and Denmark were induced to take service under the Austrian flag. The command-in-chief was given to a Dane, Admiral Dahlerup, who is described as having some difficulty in accommodating himself to the very mixed materials put at his disposal—Old Austrian, North German, and Danish officers, merchant skippers, Germans, Slaves, Dalmatians, and Illyrians: to fuse them into one homogeneous whole was no easy task.

Numbers of cadets, too, came in, members of the best Austrian families, and among them, setting the example, the emperor's brother, the Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian. After a short service in the subordinate ranks, the archduke was appointed, in 1854, rear-admiral and head of the navy. He was then only twenty-two: but his zeal compensated, to some extent, for his want of experience; and for the next ten years he devoted himself to the good of the service over which he really presided. Under his fostering care an excellent dockyard and arsenal were constructed and fortified at Pola. Many ships were built, amongst them a line-of-battle ship and three large frigates. One of these, the *Novara*, was sent on a combined scientific and training expedition, a voyage round the world; and in 1857, also in the interests of navigation and the development of Austrian commerce, Tegetthoff was despatched, in company with the distinguished ornithologist, Dr. Heuglin, on a semi-official journey in Egypt and Arabia; the object being to collect local information which might throw new light on the project of cutting a canal through the Isthmus of Suez, with a possible view to take an

early advantage of the canal, if it should be completed, and, amongst other things, to select a point suitable for a coaling station.

The two travelled up the Nile to Thebes, from there, by caravan, to Kosseir, on the Red Sea, and thence southwards, examining both coasts as they went. Near Bender Gam, in Somali Land, they were attacked by the natives, taken prisoners, and detained until their ransom was duly paid. Dr. Heuglin, who had been severely wounded, crossed over to Aden and returned to Cairo, whilst Tegetthoff pursued his investigations by himself. In an open boat, and against the north-easterly monsoon of the Gulf of Aden, he crossed over to Makallah, coasted along to Ras Fartak, and crossed again to Socotra. After exploring this island, he went back to Aden, and so to Egypt and to Europe.

Whilst at Aden he received his promotion to the rank of captain of the third class; and after serving on shore at Trieste for a few months, he was, in the autumn of 1858, appointed to the command of the screw corvette *Erzherzog Friedrich*, and sent to the coast of Morocco to inquire after the crew of a merchant ship wrecked there, who were said to have been carried as slaves into the interior. What with the Spanish war, the wanton attacks of some French ships, and the threatening neighbourhood of an English squadron, the whole coast was in a very disturbed state, and any Europeans—Austrians or others—thrown helpless on shore, would certainly be condemned to slavery, if not to death. The *Erzherzog Friedrich* had examined the whole coast of Morocco east of the Straits without obtaining any tidings of the castaways. Before going west she put into

Gibraltar for letters, and received orders to return at once to the Adriatic. War with France and Italy was imminent, and the safety of the ship, as well as the defence of the home ports, rendered her immediate recall necessary.

In the Adriatic, however, nothing was done. The French fleet, in overpowering force, swept the sea, but was not at first strong enough to attack Venice. Afterwards, when a number of floating batteries and ships of the line had been brought round, Louis Napoleon judged it opportune to send an autograph note to Franz Joseph; and on the basis of this, peace was shortly afterwards concluded. During this time the Austrian fleet was altogether unequal to any offensive measures, though such were indeed proposed. Admiral Jurien de la Gravière, who commanded the ships which instituted the blockade, tells us that—

The officers of the Austrian squadron were full of ardour; they were, even then, the same brave officers who afterwards triumphed at Lissa. They asked to be led out. They felt humiliated by the blockade: they would endeavour to raise it. But the archduke would not venture his fleet. If it should be lost, Austria would never sanction its being replaced. He chose rather to follow the example set by the defenders of Sebastopol, and applied himself to prevent our approaching the town. The line-of-battle ship *Kaiser*, which had been lately launched at Pola, was anchored in mid-channel, and instead of completing her equipment, arrangements were made to sink her at once, if necessary, so as to close the only passage available for ships having even a moderate draught of water.¹

We are told that amongst those anxious to make a dash against the French squadron Tegetthoff was con-

¹ *La Marine d'Aujourd'hui*, p. 158.

spicuous ; and it seems not improbable that a man of courage and resource, such as he afterwards proved himself to be, might have cut off some of the small cruisers or store ships in the Adriatic, and have made an unexpected diversion by an attack on the coast of France. But the attempt was not permitted ; and till the close of the war the Erzherzog Friedrich remained as inactive as the other ships.

After the peace Tegetthoff was appointed aide-de-camp to the archduke, and in this capacity accompanied him to Brazil on board the steamer *Kaiserin Elisabeth*. The account of this voyage has been written at great length by the archduke himself. Apart from the circumstance of its being the journal of a prince and emperor—round whose name such a halo of romance has circled—it is a very commonplace record of travel, and has here no special interest beyond describing to us how the archduke and his aide-de-camp T—— were ducked on crossing the Line, and reminding us of the bond of union between Tegetthoff and the head of the Austrian navy. Of the two, Tegetthoff was five years the senior ; he was altogether the stronger intellect, and there seems reason to believe that the relation between them was that of friend to friend rather than of commander to admiral, or of lordling to prince. It is certain that there was a close intimacy, and the archduke was able to advance his friend's interests at the same time that he advanced those of the service.

On their return from Brazil, Tegetthoff was, on 24 April, 1860, made a captain of the second class, and in this rank he commanded the frigate *Radetzky* in the Levant until the autumn of 1861, when she was put

out of commission. On 3 November following he was advanced to the first class, and appointed to the command of the *Novara*, the 50-gun frigate which had just come home from her voyage round the world. He was then, notwithstanding his want of seniority, sent into the Levant as commodore, and was present in Greek waters, in Phalerum Bay or the Peiræus, for a great part of 1862-3, during the Revolution and the accession of King George. Afterwards, as the *Novara* was found to be in want of extensive repairs, he was turned over to the *Schwarzenberg*, a frigate of the same size, and in her, in company with the *Radetzky*, of 31 guns, was, at the end of 1863, at Port Said, inspecting the works of the canal, on which, in fact, he is said to have written a clear and valuable report. He was still there when he received orders to go immediately to the North Sea, where the naval power of Denmark threatened to baulk some of the military plans of the Germanic spoilers.

With the *Schwarzenberg*, *Radetzky*, and a gun-vessel, the *Seehund*, *Tegetthoff* immediately went round to Brest, where he was joined by three Prussian gunboats, the *Blitz*, *Basilisk*, and *Adler*. These were put under his orders, and with the squadron so formed he left for a cruise against the Danes, who were, it was said, blockading the mouths of the Elbe and the Weser. It was about noon on 9 May, 1864, that, within sight of Heligoland, he met the Danish squadron under Commodore Suenson. The *Seehund* was not in company, and the three Prussian gunboats were paltry little things, so that his effective force consisted of simply:

<i>Schwarzenberg</i>	.	.	.	400 h.p.	48 guns
<i>Radetzky</i>	.	.	.	300 „	31 „

As against the Danish force :

Niels Juel	.	.	.	.	300 h.p.	42 guns
Jylland	.	.	.	.	400 „	44 „
Heimdal	.	.	.	.	350 „	16 „

The Austrians were clearly overmatched; and the Danes, both in prestige and efficiency, were not an enemy to whom one would willingly give odds. Nevertheless, Tegetthoff did not hesitate a moment. He was steering towards the north, Suenson towards the south; and the two, advancing straight against each other, came within range about a quarter before two o'clock.

The action which followed was the first, and with the exception of that, a few months later, between the *Kearsarge* and *Alabama*, remains the only one fought between wooden ships under steam and armed with heavy shell guns; but on neither side does any exceptional use seem to have been made of the steam-power; and the damage and loss inflicted by the shells were no greater than were in many cases, during the old French war, inflicted by much smaller cold shot. The hostile frigates, on each side in close order, one astern of the other, passed in opposite directions, interchanging their starboard broadsides. The Danes then turned to starboard, trying to cut off the Prussian gunboats, which were a long way astern; and to prevent this the Austrians also turned to starboard, countermarching their line. But in this they were a little late, and the *Schwarzenberg*, as she advanced towards the south, received a raking broadside from the *Niels Juel*. They did, however, prevent any attack on the gunboats, and the two squadrons ran in parallel lines at a distance of about 500 yards apart, and heading at first towards the south-

west, the Schwarzenberg and the Niels Juel, the Radetzky and the Jylland, supported by the Heimdal, keeping up a brisk fire on each other. About three a shell from the Niels Juel lodged in the bunt of the Schwarzenberg's foresail and burst there, setting it on fire. This rapidly spread, and the fore topmast was enveloped in flames. The fire of the Niels Juel prevented all attempts at extinguishing them, and the ship had to be kept right before the wind, which was easterly. A little after four they were within the territorial waters of Heligoland, and the action ended.

The question has often been mooted whether an action, begun outside, may not be finished within neutral waters. Bynkershoek laid down the rule that it may; some of Stowell's decisions seem to sanction it, and, apart from the arguments of lawyers, there are cases on record in which English commanders have taken the same view—notably, that of 19 August, 1759, when Boscawen captured or burnt De la Clue's ships in Lagos Bay. It is quite possible that Commodore Suenson, who had the Austrians distinctly in his grip, might have followed the precedent, and given risen to international disputes and certain ill-feeling; but the presence of the English frigate *Aurora*, under the command of Sir Leopold McClintock, prevented any such complication. The Austrians anchored, and shortly afterwards the Schwarzenberg's foremast went over the side, but the fire was not completely extinguished till ten o'clock at night. The Danes, meanwhile, after lying-to for some time, repairing damages, had gone forth. They had suffered heavily, and were in no condition to keep up a blockade of Heligoland, so that the Austrians, getting under way,

crossed over, unhindered, to Cuxhaven, where they anchored early the next morning.

Independent of the damage done to the ships—and the Schwarzenberg was certainly incapable of any prolonged defence—the loss in men stands thus : Danes, 14 killed, 54 wounded. Austrians, 36 killed, 52 badly wounded, and a great many slightly ; of which total quite six-sevenths fell on the Schwarzenberg. But the blockade was raised : the Austrians had met the Danes with a weaker force, and had not been crushed. The convenient neighbourhood of neutral water was not put too prominently forward, and the Germans claimed an effective victory, as, in fact, it strategically was, for the Danish operations on the coast were perforce ended. The Austrian emperor acknowledged Tegetthoff's telegraphic message by one promoting him to the rank of rear-admiral, and conferring on him the Order of the Iron Crown, with a war decoration. Undoubtedly Tegetthoff deserved well of the allied sovereigns. He had fought a superior enemy, superior both in force and in prestige. He had fought boldly, and though beaten, was still so far successful that the Danish navy had no further influence on the war.

Tegetthoff was now employed for a few months in the War Office at Vienna, and in 1865 was again in command of a small squadron in the Mediterranean. With this, in the beginning of 1866, he was recalled to Pola, to take part in the war with Italy, which was finally declared on 20 June.

This new war found the Austrian navy in a very unprepared condition. The popular idea seems to have been that the late alliance with Prussia had inaugurated

a reign of peace; that there were to be no more wars; and though, as a measure of precaution, an army might be necessary, to spend money on a fleet was downright waste, and, in the impoverished state of the treasury, a thing not to be thought of. Accordingly, the ships which were unfinished when the Archduke Maximilian went to Mexico, were unfinished still; and what ships there were had been permitted to lie by, waiting till it was convenient to repair them. But though Maximilian was no longer there to direct the work or to push it forward, when the necessity occurred the navy still enjoyed the benefit of his rule. He had insisted that the navy should be a national force, that the ships and their engines, as well as their men, should be Austrian. The arsenal at Pola was a reality; and the ships, though unfinished, were in their own hands, to be got ready as soon as possible. The one point in which they had trusted to foreign resources was the only one that utterly failed them. But it was an important one. A number of heavy guns which had been ordered from Krupp's works were stopped by the Prussians, and the want could not now be adequately supplied.

The spirit of the service was, however, excellent. Tegetthoff, with the few ships ready for sea, took up his station at Fâsana; and whilst the men—raw recruits most of them—were drilled almost incessantly, the admiral inspired the commanding officers, and through them the seamen, with courage and confidence. Other ships were fitted out, hastily, imperfectly, but still equal to the emergency. The two large ships, armoured frigates of the first class, were pushed forward; their spars were not ready, but they were jury-rigged, and sent

to Fasana. These were ships which, though somewhat smaller, may, in horse-power and armour, be compared to our Royal Oak; wooden ships, with $4\frac{1}{2}$ -inch plating, of 800 horse-power, of 5,130 tons displacement, and, failing the Krupp guns, armed with 16 smooth-bore 48-pounders. On board one of these, the Erzherzog Ferdinand Maximilian—which was shortly called Ferdinand Max, or, affectionately, Max—Tegetthoff hoisted his flag. Presently came the Kaiser, a 90-gun ship, similar to those two-deckers which, only three years before, had formed the bulk of our Mediterranean fleet. Then came the Novara, which had narrowly escaped burning at the hands of an incendiary, but which had been repaired as quickly and as well as circumstances permitted; then also the Don Juan de Austria, meant for an armour-plated ship, but ironclad only at the water line and the after part; forward, the want of the plates was supplied by wooden planking. By the end of June the admiral had with him, under his immediate orders, the whole of the available force of the Austrian navy: seven (so-called) ironclad frigates, the 90-gun ship, two 50-gun frigates, four smaller, and a number of gun-vessels, gunboats, and fast steamers, including one of the Austrian Lloyd's boats. But everything was in the rough—the ships, as I have just said, very much so; the masts and rigging, the fittings and the guns, such as could be got most readily and most quickly. 'Only send them,' wrote Tegetthoff—'send them as they are; I'll find some use for them.'

The men were almost all newly raised; their gun-drill went on all day and every day; they were exercised more especially in firing concentrated broadsides—that

is, in laying the guns by marks on the ships' decks, so as all to converge to a focus, and firing them as one, at the word.

Above all, the several captains were fully in the admiral's confidence. Promoted as he had been, for actual service without reference to seniority, Tegetthoff was probably junior to many of those under his command. Possibly he felt this might be a difficulty in his way. It does not appear to have been so; the hopes, and fears, and plans, and strategy, and tactics of the campaign before them seem to have been discussed in friendly conclave, of which Tegetthoff was the president and the soul. He imbued them with his fiery spirit. The wooden ships might be roughly armoured with ranges of chain-cable fastened on abreast of the boilers: it would give the stokers some sense of protection. The guns were weak: they must be supplemented by the ships themselves: if a 48-pound shot would not pierce the enemy's plates, a 5,000-ton ship might. Hence the determination to use the ships freely as rams. To fire by concentrated broadsides and to ram—these were the elements of the tactics, the details of which were discussed in all their probable bearings. When the day came that saw them face to face with the enemy, every captain knew the admiral's intention as well as the admiral himself did; every officer knew what had to be done, and every man had some idea of it, and above all knew that he had to fight.

The Italian navy was on a widely different footing from the Austrian. From the birth of the kingdom, six years before, the fixed idea of the Italians had been to have a navy. They aimed at being a great naval power;

and, by liberal expenditure, had got together a number of ships that could compare even with the fleets of England or France. They were able to collect at Ancona a force of twelve armour-plated ships, besides a large number of powerful wooden frigates and smaller craft.

Of their armoured ships, most had been built abroad; the two largest, the *Rè d'Italia* and the *Rè di Portogallo*, in America. These were wooden ships of 5,700 tons displacement; they were armoured with $5\frac{1}{2}$ -inch plates, had engines of 800 horse-power, and could steam from 12 to 13 knots. Some controversy arose afterwards as to whether their construction was as good as it was believed to be; they were said to be unsound, built of green wood, and incurably foul from the filth that had been thrown down the lining, and so built into them. Whether this was the case or not, it is difficult to determine; but there is reason to believe that their scantling was too weak—a fault which proved fatal to the *Rè Italia*. Their armament consisted of two 300-pounder Armstrong guns, ten smooth-bore 10-inch guns, and twenty-four rifle guns throwing shot of 90 pounds. If we remember what our own navy was in 1866, we shall see that the *Bellerophon* was the only ship we had then afloat which, as an effective man-of-war, could be said to be decidedly superior to these. Our ships of the *Prince Consort* class, though a little bigger, had thinner armour, and had no rifled guns; no more had the *Achilles*, whose extreme length would have made her compare unfavourably, as a tactical engine, with either of these two Italians.

Two others, the *Terribile* and the *Formidabile*, had

been built in France; these were iron ships of 2,700 tons, with $4\frac{1}{2}$ -inch plates over 14 inches of backing—they had ram bows, then still a novelty, and were said to have a speed of 12 knots. Of the others I will only mention in detail the *Affondatore*, a turret ship, built in England; she was of 4,000 tons and 700 horse-power; she had a spur 30 feet long, and though she had only two guns they were 300-pounder Armstrongs. Besides these there were five others of about 4,000 tons, and two smaller of 2,000 tons, the *Palestro* and *Varese*, which were only partially plated, their bows and sterns being left unarmoured. These ships were all armed with rifled guns, principally of cast-iron with strengthening coils, which threw 90-pound shot. In mere material force the Italian fleet was at least double the Austrian; but the government, whilst spending freely on their new ships and guns, had neglected to ensure the quality of their officers and the discipline of their seamen.

The officers were young, without knowledge or experience, without the discipline or even the social training which teaches men so thrown together to live in mutual amity; there was a lamentable want of harmony between those of the same grade, and of deference from inferiors to superiors. This was nothing new; it had always been so in the Sardinian navy, and was aggravated by the coalition with the Neapolitan. It was so universal that the writer from whom I quote concludes that it is the necessary condition of naval life: 'Everybody,' he says, 'knows that this poisonous plant takes root and flourishes amongst other seafaring people; and it seems that the compulsory and continual living together renders it difficult to avoid the clashing of in-

dividual characters, and makes their differences more acrimonious.¹

The command in chief of this fleet was entrusted to Persano, the one admiral of the Italian navy; under him were Albini, vice-admiral, and Vacca, rear-admiral. Vacca was a Neapolitan; Albini, a native of Sardinia. Carlo Pellion di Persano, of noble family, was born at Vercelli, in Piedmont, in 1806. At the age of eighteen he entered the Sardinian navy, and having passed through the regular grades of the service, was made a captain in 1841. He then commanded the Eridano brig for a three years' commission in the Pacific; and, during the Adriatic campaign of 1848-9, had had command of the brig Daino, in which he is said to have distinguished himself. In 1851 he was in command of the Governolo, which carried to London the Piedmontese contribution to that first International Exhibition. Afterwards, in 1859, he had command of the Carlo Alberto, a 50-gun frigate; and having served in her through the operations of that year, was, in October, raised to the rank of rear-admiral. He then had charge of the squadron which, in the early summer of 1860, was co-operating with Garibaldi on the coast of Sicily; after which he conducted the naval attack on Ancona, and received the surrender of Lamoricière on board the flagship, the Maria Adelaide, on 30 September. For this service he was made a vice-admiral; Albini, the second in command, being at the same time made a rear-admiral. In 1862 Persano was a member of the Ratazzi cabinet, as minister for the navy, and, on its break up

¹ *La Guerra in Italia nel 1866. L'Esercito, la Flotta e i Volontari Italiani.* Studio militare (Milan, 1867), p. 344.

in the end of the year, before he retired from office, promoted himself to the rank of admiral.

This is a short outline of Persano's service claims to distinction. He was generally esteemed as a man of good family and of amiable temper; he had married an English lady, and being thus connected with English society, was looked on as partly an Englishman, or at least was supposed to have caught, as if by infection, the good qualities of the typical English naval officer. When the war broke out in 1866, he was considered the man of the day, and great things were expected from him. He proved, however, wanting in almost every gift which raises an officer to the height of an emergency. At Taranto, where he took the command on 16 May, he found that a great deal was still wanting to make the fleet fit for active service; the equipment was imperfect, the men were newly raised, the senior and commissioned officers were inefficient, and of petty officers there was a great scarcity. Such defects were, of course, very real, but Tegetthoff, at Fasana, was struggling manfully against the same; at Taranto or at Ancona Persano does not seem to have realised that it was his duty to do this. 'Send me what you have,' wrote Tegetthoff to the minister for the navy, 'I will do something with it.' Persano's tone was rather, 'If you don't send me what I ask for, I can do nothing.' And, meantime, he did nothing. The drills were slack, discipline uncared for, and the equipment left very much to itself.

Any competent witness who had been able to study the condition, the preparation, above all the temper of the two fleets, as they lay in their respective roadsteads, would have had no doubt as to the result of a hostile

meeting between them. Though the material superiority lay so entirely with the Italians, he would have remarked that a large proportion of the Austrian seamen were Dalmatians, the descendants of the Uscocchi and other maritime tribes of the Gulf of Quarnero, the best and sturdiest seamen that the Mediterranean has ever seen, the men who had for centuries upheld the supremacy of Venice in the Adriatic, or who, on their own account, had questioned the rule alike of Venetian, Turk, or Spaniard; he would have remarked the personal difference of the admirals, and its effect on the courage and temper of their subordinates; and, finally, he would have remembered that at St. Vincent, the Nile, or Trafalgar, an English fleet had conquered against nominal odds as great as, or even greater than, those which now told in favour of the Italians.

But to the general public, or even to the government of Italy, nothing of this was known. It was known that the Austrian ships were paltry; it was, perhaps, supposed that they were worse than they really were. It was known that 300 millions of *lire* (12,000,000*l.*) had been spent on the Italian fleet within the last five years, and it was taken for granted that good value had been got for the money, as indeed it had. But beyond this public knowledge did not go; and neither the government nor the people doubted for a moment that Persano was master of the situation. 'The Adriatic,' wrote Depretis, the minister for the navy, 'is an Italian sea, and the Austrian flag must disappear from it. Do as you think best, but this end must be attained.' In every *café* in Venice, in Milan, throughout the north of Italy, this end was spoken of as certain. Young Italy was as ready to discuss naval

as political affairs, and knew as little about one as about the other.

As soon as war was declared, on 20 June, Tegetthoff had despatched the *Stadium*, the Austrian Lloyd's steamer, to find out exactly where the Italian fleet was, and what its force. The *Stadium* reported, on the 23rd, that as far south as Bari it was not to be seen. The admiral jumped to the conclusion that it would be coming round from Taranto, probably in scattered order, possibly in small detachments, and at once resolved to go with what force he had and look for it. With six ironclads, the *Schwarzenberg*, and four gun-vessels, he left Fasana on 24 June; at daybreak of the 27th he was off Ancona. The main body of the Italian fleet had arrived there two days before. They mustered eleven ironclads, four large frigates, and sundry smaller vessels, a force certainly more than double that of the Austrians. But they were coaling in a promiscuous and disorderly manner. The *Rè d'Italia's* coal had caught fire in the bunkers; the *Rè di Portogallo* had got water in her cylinders; almost every ship had some defect due to carelessness, stupidity, or ignorance, and none was ready to go out and attack the enemy. When at last some of them did get under way, they pottered about, performing silly or pedantic evolutions in the entrance of the harbour, while Tegetthoff, having seen all that he wanted to see, and having encouraged his men by the sight of a timid or disorganised enemy, went quietly back to Fasana. Some rumours, much to Persano's discredit, were not slow to arise, but they do not seem to have then taken any definite form. The minister urged him to do something—anything you will, provided you cause the Austrian

flag to disappear from the Adriatic. Persano replied, making difficulties: the Austrians would not meet him; Pola was impregnable; his ships were not properly equipped; his men were undisciplined; his officers were incompetent.

The Count Carlo di Persano and the Honourable John Byng, few men have been more unlike each other. Persano was gentle, amiable, social, and personally brave; Byng was a small-minded martinet, haughty and reserved. But Persano's correspondence has a curious resemblance to Byng's; it shows the same querulous incapacity, the same desire to have things done by others, the same unwillingness to do anything for himself. Byng's letters have long been before the world: if I quote one or two disjointed sentences it is only by way of emphasis:—

I am firmly of opinion . . . that the throwing men into the castle will only . . . add to the numbers that must fall into the enemy's hands, for the garrison, in time, will be obliged to surrender.

I am afraid all communication will be cut off between us; . . . for *if* the enemy have erected batteries . . . it will render it impossible for our boats to have a passage.

Many of the ships that came out with me are foul. I fear from the inconvenience we shall meet here there will be great difficulty in keeping the ships clean, as there is but one wharf for them to prepare and careen at.

And now for Persano:—

It is my duty to submit to your Excellency that the ships which join the fleet from day to day are incompletely manned, especially in regard to their petty officers; and—which is of more consequence—are without trained gunners, who are now more than ever necessary, on account of the greater

number of rifled guns, which require long and careful drill. And this when hostilities are every moment expected to begin!

This awakens very serious thoughts.

The fleet is not ready for war.

It will take at least a month to bring it to a tolerable pitch.

Help me, I earnestly entreat you.

Finally, on 8 July, Persano was induced to put to sea. He went for a five days' cruise, but kept carefully out of sight of land. It had been rumoured that the fleet was to range the Istrian coast, and confront Tegetthoff at Fasana or Pola. It did nothing of the kind; it stood to the south-east, and in mid-channel sailed backwards and forwards in open order, the ships keeping 1,000 yards apart from each other, and exercising none of the manœuvres of battle. They were better hidden, it was said, in the middle of the Adriatic than were the Austrians at Pola. Boggio, a member of the Chamber of Deputies, had embarked on board the *Rè d'Italia*, as Persano's guest, and seems to have understood that he was to pay for his entertainment by indiscriminate praise. 'How cowardly are these Austrians!' he said, 'they will not give us a chance; they fly before us.' But the Marquis Paolucci, Albini's flag-captain, to whom the remark was addressed, replied: 'It is not the Austrians who should be called cowardly, it is we who have been humiliated,' and Albini had previously permitted himself to say in Paolucci's hearing, 'This is not the way to make war! We have lost an opportunity which may never return.'

The feeling against Persano was general, and he was urged to go out.

‘Would you tell the people,’ wrote Depretis, ‘the people who are vain enough to believe our sailors the best in the world, that after spending three hundred millions, we have done nothing better than get together a squadron which dare not meet the Austrian? Why, they’d stone us! As if the mere name of the Austrian navy has not always been a subject of ridicule. If Tegetthoff declines to meet us, we will effect a landing somewhere on the coast; at Lissa, for instance. Lissa, by its central position, would ensure us the sovereignty of the Adriatic; let us take Lissa.’

There seems to have been no positive order to attack Lissa, only to do something; but Lissa had been suggested, and Persano had not sufficient force of character or originality of judgment to disapprove of it, or to suggest any distinct alternative. He would have preferred remaining at Ancona, brilliant in a gold coat trimmed with blue cloth, but that he was not allowed to do. And so, on the afternoon of 16 July, in a state of hurry and flurry, he put to sea, having neither detailed charts, nor plans, nor information as to the defences of Lissa; without even the soldiers that had been offered him as a force for landing.

But why Lissa? In England, Lissa, if known at all, was known only as the head-quarters of our Adriatic cruisers in the old French war, and as giving a name to the brilliant little action (12 March, 1811) in which Captain Hoste, with his squadron of three frigates and a corvette, not only defeated the Franco-Venetian squadron of six frigates, a brig, and four small craft, a force more than double his own, but drove the French commodore’s ship irrecoverably on shore, captured two others, and compelled a third, which afterwards escaped, to strike her flag.

Lissa is an island, or rather a mass of hill and mountain, eleven miles long from east to west, and six broad from north to south, rising in some of its peaks to a height of nearly 2,000 feet. Its principal productions, according to the gazetteer, are wine, oil, almonds, and figs; bees, sheep, and goats are reared in great numbers by its inhabitants; and near its coasts are rich sardine fisheries. But neither figs nor sardines formed its value in Italian eyes. The English had fortified the principal harbour, the Bay of San Giorgio, and on its recurring to the Austrians the fortifications had been preserved and added to. In time of war it evidently might, from its position and security, become a place of the utmost importance. Besides San Giorgio, in the north-east corner of the island, there are two minor harbours, Comisa at the extreme west, and Manego at the south-east corner, the fortifications of which, though small, were situated on high ground, so as to be secure against any mere naval attack: they might very well have been left to surrender when the forts of San Giorgio had been carried.

Persano, however, thought differently. The fleet arrived in the neighbourhood of the island on the night of the 17th; by dawn of the 18th it was off San Giorgio. Albini with the wooden ships was to attack Manego; Vacca with three of the ironclads was to shell Comisa; Persano with the main body was to operate against San Giorgio. By eleven o'clock, fire was opened on Comisa. It was quite futile. The forts were perched on the hills at heights of 500 feet, which to Vacca seemed more than twice as much. After an hour or two he gave up the attempt, and joined Albini off Manego. The forts there

were judged to be even higher than at Comisa, and as the big Dahlgren gun which one of the frigates carried on her forecastle could not reach up to them, no other shots were fired. Towards evening, the two divisions went round and rejoined the admiral off San Giorgio.

There the action had been lively. The forts at the entrance of the harbour had been blown up by shells bursting in their magazines; and the main fort, Madonna, which raked the harbour, had been silenced several times; but the Austrians stuck manfully to their guns, and each time renewed their defence. The *Rè d'Italia* alone fired 1,300 shot. Boggio enjoyed his holiday on the poop, and wrote the next day to his friend Depretis: 'The noise was infernal. Your humble correspondent remained on the poop from eleven o'clock to half-past six, exposed to a storm of shell.' After which he was good enough to send a certificate of the admiral's conduct. 'Persano is most unjustly accused; he deserves the perfect confidence of the government and the country. The heavy responsibility may have rendered him unduly careful; but now that the time of action has arrived, what a difference is there between him and others!' Nevertheless, when evening closed in, no decisive advantage had been gained, nor did it seem probable that, without troops, any could be gained. And time was scant; for the obvious precaution of cutting the telegraph wire had not been adopted till the fleet had been seen and reported from the island to Pola—not indeed till the engagement had actually commenced, and the record of a return message from Tegetthoff had been found: 'Hold out till the fleet can come to you.'

The following day the *Affondatore* and two wooden frigates joined from Ancona, bringing a strong detachment of soldiers. This put Persano in a position to land 2,200 men, and he determined to persevere. The *Terribile* and *Varese* were again sent to occupy the attention of *Comisa*. The *Formidabile* and *Affondatore* were to go into the harbour and engage Fort Madonna: Vacca in the *Principe di Carignano* was to support them. For this, Vacca found there was no room. The *Formidabile*, leading in, took up a position in front of the fort; the *Affondatore* was held in play by some flanking works which did her no more damage than she did them; but the *Formidabile* had a hot time, and after an hour she had had enough of it, and drew off. She had three or four men killed and about sixty wounded; her rigging, boats, bulwarks and everything not covered by the armour were cut to pieces, her funnel shot away, and six of her port-lids;¹ and though neither shot nor shell had penetrated her armour, a shell bursting on the sill of one of the ports had killed two and wounded ten men at the gun, and filled the battery with such a dense smoke that the guns' crews were nearly stifled. The attack for that day had failed; the only result of it had been to get the *Formidabile* knocked to bits. It was resolved, therefore, to try on the morrow what the landing party could do. And this resolution Persano stuck to, notwithstanding Tegetthoff's intercepted telegram: 'Hold out till the fleet can come to you.' He seems to have been positively unable to entertain or to weigh two ideas; the one, to capture San

¹ The port-lids are the solid shutters that close the ports; the idea conveyed in the term would seem to be analogous to that in eye-lids.

Giorgio, had filled his mind; the other, the probable advent of Tegetthoff, could find no place.

Accordingly, the next morning preparations were made for landing. The *Terribile* and *Varese* were to renew the attempt on Comisa. Albini, from the wooden ships, was to land the troops and small-arm men. The ironclads were to engage the forts. No intimation was given to the captains of the ships, nor even to the vice and rear admirals, that the enemy's fleet might be expected. Vacca alone had heard of the telegram; and that only by reason of the accident of his having had direct communication with the flagship. When, about eight o'clock in the morning (20 July, 1866), the *Esploratore*, a despatch vessel, came in from her look-out station, with the signal flying, 'Enemy in sight,' it was to the whole fleet as startling as a thunder clap. Albini, with his division, had the boats out and full of military stores, waiting for the signal to land. The signal was, instead, to hold on, and a few minutes later, 'Enemy in sight—prepare for action.' It was the first intimation he had that there was a near chance of the enemy's fleet coming. Neither on the previous evening, nor at any other time, had there been any consultation, or any explanation of the admiral's wishes or intentions. The order had indeed been given that, as Albini had been placed by the minister in more immediate command of the wooden or reserve squadron, Vacca was to command the van or right wing, and Ribotty, the captain of the *Rè di Portogallo*, to command the rear or left wing, according as the fleet was in line ahead or abreast. But nothing more. Vacca's words, as afterwards given in evidence before the court,

are: 'No council was called, nor was the plan of battle discussed, as the regulations direct. I was unable to form any idea of what the commander-in-chief meant to do.'

To interpret the thought of another man is difficult. In this case I do not believe that there was a thought to interpret. Persano had formed no plan. He had either not permitted himself to think of the possibility of Tegetthoff's approach, or he had trusted to that inborn genius which I often hear spoken of. When the hour of trial came, the admiral was more utterly unprepared than any of his subordinates. Tegetthoff was advancing from about north-west. The Italian ironclad squadron, or so much of it as was available, was hastily formed in line abreast, and steered towards him. But the *Terribile* and *Varese* were at the other end of the island, some ten or twelve miles off, and the *Formidabile* was so shattered that she made the signal for permission to part company, and lay to, repairing damages. Her captain, Saint-Bon—who had joined only just as she left Ancona, and did not know his officers even by name—afterwards deposed that her ports were so low, so near the water, that it was impossible for him to prepare for action in such a swell as was then on; so many of his port-lids had been shot away that he must have been swamped. He hoped to have rejoined the fleet within a few hours, but, contrary to all expectation, the fight was over before he was ready.

After standing towards the enemy for a short half-hour, some hazy recollection of last century's wars seems to have flitted across Persano's mind: he made the signal to form line of battle towards the north-east,

that is, nearly at right angles to the course on which the Austrians were advancing. He expected—or at least said so afterwards—that Albini, with the wooden frigates, would form a second line on his starboard, or right-hand side, leaving the picking up of the boats and soldiers to the small craft. But Albini had no orders, and, failing these, fell back on a sort of general understanding that wooden ships were not needlessly to engage ironclads. He accordingly stayed well to the rear, and, as far as the fight which followed was concerned, might as well—or better—have been at Ancona.

And meantime Tegetthoff was advancing at full speed; his seven ironclad ships, in a double oblique line in front, the *Erzherzog Ferdinand Maximilian* leading, the salient point of this wedge of war. Behind, at a distance of 1,000 yards, were the seven wooden ships, in a similar formation, the *Kaiser* leading in the wake of the *Ferdinand Max*, the 50-gun frigates *Novara* and *Schwarzenberg* covering the right and left wings; and another 1,000 yards farther astern were the gun-vessels, also in double echelon; behind all, the despatch vessels and miscellaneous small craft. But Tegetthoff's plans had been arranged long beforehand, and as he advanced the only signals he had to make were: 'Clear for action'—'Close up'—'Full speed;' and lastly, at 10h. 35m., 'Ironclads are to rush against the enemy and sink him.'¹

The charge of the Austrian squadron must be described as brilliant; it was made in good order and with

¹ The wording of this signal, which may be considered as Tegetthoff's tactical legacy, was, 'Panzerschiffe den Feind anrennen und zum sinken bringen.'

an admirable unanimity and steadiness ; but the speed of it has, nevertheless, been very incorrectly stated. It seems quite certain that none of the ships in the Austrian fleet could steam at a rate exceeding ten knots, if so much. I believe that the speed of the charge was not more than eight knots ; but probably enough it seemed more, and especially to the thunderstruck Italians.

And now, as the crash was imminent, Persano carried out the idea of changing his ship. His flag was flying at the main of the *Rè d'Italia*. He signalled the *Affondatore* to close. The *Rè d'Italia* was stopped for quite ten minutes, and the admiral with his personal staff, but leaving behind his guest and adulator, Boggio, went on board the turret-ship. The two or three ships immediately astern, which, owing to the unexpected stoppage of the *Rè d'Italia*, had probably ranged up abreast of her, saw what was going on, but no one else did. The van had held on its course, and, at a distance of nearly a mile, only saw that a boat passed ; and since the ships were all dressed with flags, an ensign at every masthead and everywhere else where an ensign could be hoisted, the admiral's flag—which differs but little from an ensign—could not be distinguished. In their subsequent examination, Vacca and Albini stated positively that they had no idea that any such change had been made ; they both looked to the *Rè d'Italia* for signals and saw none. The *Affondatore's* masts were mere sticks, quite unsuitable for signalling ; and in the crowd of flags, any signals she made were little likely to attract notice, and did not attract it. If signals were made, no one saw them, and the battle fought itself.

About a quarter of an hour after the *Rè d'Italia* had resumed her way, the front line of the Austrians—the ironclads—in a compact mass passed through the Italian line, or rather through the gap which the *Rè d'Italia* had opened. As they approached, Vacca opened fire at a distance stated by the Austrians as 1,000 or 1,200 yards, but which the Italians call 200; the discrepancy may perhaps be reconciled by supposing that some straggling shots were fired at long range, but none by Vacca's orders until the ships were close to. It is at least agreed that the Austrians did not fire till they were within 200 yards. Then they did; and in the cloud of smoke in which their own fire enveloped them, passed harmlessly through the gap. Captain Colomb suggests that the *Rè d'Italia* may have eased to let them so pass through; but there is no evidence of this, and the gap was already there, owing to the previous stoppage.

As the Austrians advanced, Vacca, with the three leading ships, bore to the left and enfiladed their line; then, also, the line of wooden frigates, and, circling round, came into the rear of all, with the intention of destroying some, at least, of the small craft in the third division. But Commodore Petz in the *Kaiser*, and with the wooden ships, was meanwhile edging away towards the south, to attack the wooden division of the Italian fleet. On his part, Ribotty had turned to the left, and was steering with his three ships—the *Varese* had just rejoined—to interpose between Petz and Tegetthoff, so as to let Albini have the undisturbed enjoyment of his share of the fray; but Albini made no move to take advantage of this, and Petz, seeing the *Rè di Por-*

togallo and the other two ships heading towards him, turned to meet them.

On the way he encountered the *Affondatore*; the two ships were running right against each other, bows on; a collision seemed unavoidable, but the *Affondatore* turned off and passed away. The *Kaiser* then engaged the *Rè di Portogallo*, firing concentrated broadsides. Between two such ships, the *Kaiser*, an old-fashioned line-of-battle ship, and the *Rè di Portogallo*, an ironclad of 5,700 tons, carrying amongst her thirty-six guns, all rifled, two 300-pounder Armstrongs, the word combat ought to be inapplicable. That the *Kaiser* ever came out of it, speaks, more positively than any detailed evidence, of the inefficiency of the Italians. What happened was this. The *Kaiser*, finding that her guns produced no impression on the ironclad's sides, resolved to ram her and did so. The shock carried away her own stem and bowsprit; her figure-head remained on the *Rè di Portogallo*'s quarter-deck; her foremast also went, sweeping away the funnel in its fall; flames and smoke smothered the upper deck, and the ship, grinding alongside the ironclad, received her broadside at this very close range. That she was not destroyed seems almost to confirm the report, that the Italian gunners in their flurry fired blank cartridges.

Still firing, the *Kaiser* passed on, and on her way was again met by the *Affondatore*. This ship was fitted specially as a ram. She had a spur thirty feet long—a touch would have been fatal. She was coming straight on. Her quarry was before her, nearly square; a slight turn towards the left would have made its destruction certain. Her commander gave the order for

the men to throw themselves flat on their faces, '*Pancia a terra!*' when to his surprise, to the surprise of everybody who could see, her helm was put hard over, and she turned away to the right, receiving at a very close range the Kaiser's concentrated broadside on her thinly armoured deck. The true reason of the Affondatore's conduct will for ever remain doubtful. It is certain that the order to turn to the right was given, and given with repeated emphasis, by Persano himself; but whether his doing so was a simple, well-meaning error of judgment, whether he was afraid of the effect of the shock on the exaggerated spur, or whether his humanity revolted from the idea of putting nine hundred Austrians into the water, cannot possibly be decided.

But the Kaiser, closely followed by the Novara and the others, passed through the rear of the Italian line, interchanging a heavy fire with the ships of that division—the Rè di Portogallo, Maria Pia, and Varese. The loss fell almost entirely on the Kaiser and Novara. The Kaiser, in addition to the loss of her masts and funnel, had 24 men killed, and 75, amongst whom was the commodore, wounded. The Novara had 7, including her captain, killed, and 20 wounded. The rest of the division had in all but 3 killed and 9 wounded. But the Kaiser was disabled; her engineer reported that he could not keep up steam; and she made her way with difficulty, though unopposed, into St. Giorgio.

The crisis of the fight was, however, farther north, amongst the ironclads. The three leading ships, forming Vacca's division, had encircled the rear of the Austrian small craft, but too slowly to enclose them or even to do them any harm. The three sternmost ships under

Ribotty, as well as the *Affondatore*, were engaged with the *Kaiser* and her consorts; and the three in the centre—the *Rè d'Italia*, *Palestro*, and *San Martino*—were opposed to the concentrated force of the seven Austrian ironclads. The result of Persano's want of forethought, or of his trust in the inspiration of the moment, was, that with a fleet of twelve ironclad ships against seven, the actual condition of the fight was that three were opposed to the seven, and were beaten by them.

This is the one great tactical lesson which the action seems to me to convey. Captain Colomb has spoken of the result of the first charge of the Austrian ironclads as the dividing of the Italian line. In this I am compelled to differ from him. The Italian line was divided before the charge quite as much as after; and no part of it was really cut off by the mere passing through a very wide gap. The resulting break was, in fact, rather in the Austrian fleet, whose wooden division was exposed to a concentrated attack from *Vacca*, *Ribotty*, and *Albini*, which must have been overwhelming had these been men of energy and decision, had there been between them a fixedness and unanimity of purpose; and which, even as it was, might well have been fatal.

Of this *Tegetthoff* seems to have been quickly aware. The ironclads were turned, as soon as the threatened attack could be seen; the signal was to support the second division; and with that they charged back again. For a few minutes the centre of the battle was enveloped in smoke. When it cleared away the fight was virtually at an end.

The Austrian ironclads were painted black, but their funnels were all differently coloured, so that a glimpse

through the smoke was sufficient to identify the ship. Between the Italians there was no such difference; they were all painted grey, and, under the circumstances, were undistinguishable from each other. There was thus no choice of an enemy, and once again in the smoke, Tegetthoff's order was simple, 'Ram everything grey!' Backwards and forwards, it is impossible to say how often, the ships passed; the Don Juan and the Kaiser Max hunted the San Martino; the Prinz Eugen, Salamander and Drache took the pressure off the Kaiser and Novara, and engaged the rear division. Moll, the captain of the Drache, was killed; and for a few minutes the command devolved upon a young ensign, Weyprecht, who afterwards won European fame as the commander of the Arctic discovery ship Tegetthoff. Twice, in the smoke, the Ferdinand Max rammed a grey mass, but inefficiently; the angle of impact was too oblique. A shell from one of her 48-pounders, a smooth, round, old-fashioned shell, burst in the Palestro's ward-room, and set her on fire. Suddenly through the smoke, a stationary grey mass was dimly seen. Tegetthoff pointed her out to his flag-captain, Baron von Sterneek. The engine-room telegraph carried down the order, 'Full speed ahead!' The Max started forward and struck the grey mass—an enemy's ship—abreast the foremast, on the port side. It rolled to starboard through an angle roughly estimated at 45°; then, as the Max backed out of the hole she had made, it rolled heavily to port, showing the deck and the terror-stricken crowd on it to the appalled conquerors, and sank. At such a moment, seconds are as years; but it is believed that between the blow and the disappearance the

time did not exceed *two* minutes ; it was 20 minutes past 11 ;¹ 37 minutes since the first shot had been fired.

The Elisabeth, a paddlewheel despatch-boat which had followed Tegetthoff into the thick of the fight, was ordered to pick up as many of the drowning men as she could ; but the Italian ships, knowing nothing of what had happened, presently drove her away. She was struck four times, had one man killed and four wounded ; and was compelled to look out for her own safety. It was then, and only then, known from the prisoners that the sunken ship was the *Rè d'Italia*. Amongst the few picked up by the boats of one of the Italian ships was the commander, Del Santo : his deposition can scarcely fail to be interesting. He says that after the first Austrian charge, the Ferdinand Max ' began a series of evolutions with the intention of sinking us ; keeping up all the time a very hot fire of musketry and artillery, at a distance of only a few yards.' It seems therefore that no attempt was made to turn the tables ; the idea of sinking the Max did not occur to the Italians.

' Two or three times our men were called to repel boarders, as the enemy threatened our stern or broadside, and once the division of firemen, to extinguish the fire which an enemy's shell had kindled in the admiral's cabin. Our ship's company behaved splendidly, and especially those of them stationed on the poop, where they were quite without shelter. Amongst these was Boggio, the deputy, who, with his eyeglass in his eye, was firing away with his revolver, determined to sell his life as dearly as possible. All at once, as the smoke slightly lifted, I saw the Ferdinand Max coming down against us on our port side. I rushed to warn the

¹ The time of the Kaiser ineffectually ramming the *Rè di Portogallo* is given as 11h. 17m. The two were thus almost simultaneous.

captain of it. As our rudder had been rendered almost un-serviceable by the enemy's fire, he gave the order, ' Full speed astern ! ' but it was too late to prevent the enemy striking us just abreast the foremast. The ship did not feel any such shock as one would think the necessary consequence of the blow, but heeled over to port, very gradually, and sank.'

With the *Rè d'Italia* sunk, and the *Palestro* at a distance trying to extinguish the flames, the action in the centre was at an end. The two fleets collected themselves, but in a changed position. The Austrians were now in-shore and covering Lissa. The Italians had been pushed out to seaward; the *Palestro* blew up about two o'clock; and, thoroughly cowed by the loss they had sustained, they were in no humour to attempt to regain their position. The Austrians, on the other hand, had accomplished their purpose, and there was no reason why they should hazard their advantage by a fresh attack on a force still numerically superior. They waited for a couple of hours, and seeing no intention on the part of the enemy to renew the engagement, they went into St. Giorgio; the gun-vessels first, then the wooden frigates, the ironclads following; the *Ferdinand Max*, the last of all, let go her anchor about sundown.

Such in its broad facts was the battle of Lissa, concerning which, as I have already said, some curiously wrong ideas have got into circulation. These are assuredly not worth looking for and contradicting one by one; but perhaps the most common of them is, that an Austrian wooden line-of-battle ship rammed and sank an Italian ironclad, and from that the inference is drawn that a wooden ship can encounter an ironclad on fairly equal terms. As giving rise to and supporting such an

inference the mistake is therefore important. So far as it is possible to trace its origin, I think it arose from a confusion between the Ferdinand Max and the Kaiser Max, and the Kaiser, three totally distinct ships; the two first were ironclads, the third a 90-gun ship. What the Ferdinand Max and the Kaiser severally did, I have already told at length; but as opposed to the popular misrepresentation, I will say, in so many words: The ship which rammed and sank the Italian ironclad was herself an ironclad of nearly the same size; and the line-of battle ship, which rammed an ironclad, injured herself very much and her enemy very little. That of the whole Austrian loss of 38 killed, 35 were on board the wooden ships, and 24 of them on board the Kaiser alone, shows how little the efficiency of the two classes of ships can be compared. As to other absurd stories that have been circulated, it would be trouble thrown away to repeat them or to contradict them.

As is very well known, the Italians were excessively disgusted with the result of the action, so different from what they had flattered themselves it would be. Persano was loudly accused of gross misconduct—of cowardice—of treason—of everything that was vile; and that so persistently, that after some delay it was determined to bring him to trial. But he was a Senator—a peer of the realm, so to speak—and could not, according to the constitution, be tried by a court-martial. The whole Senate was therefore formed into a High Court of Justice. The trial lasted for several months: a vast number of witnesses were examined; and their evidence, joined to the detailed Austrian accounts, leaves us little to wish for so far as knowledge of the facts is concerned; a knowledge

of motives can never perhaps be satisfactorily ascertained.¹

The court, which on 29 January, 1867, acquitted the admiral on the more serious charges of cowardice and treason, on 15 April found him guilty of negligence and incapacity (*neghgenza e imperizia*). On 27 June he had manifestly disobeyed his instructions, which were to clear the Adriatic of the enemy's ships; on the cruise from 8 to 13 July he had equally violated his instructions by not seeking an opportunity to attack the enemy, or to blockade him in his harbours; and finally at Lissa he had let himself be surprised by the enemy, he had made no disposition for battle, had called² no council of war, had gone without general intimation on board the *Affondatore*, had permitted the enemy to break his line, had managed the *Affondatore* badly, and had left the battle to itself; and the court therefore sentenced him to be deprived of his rank as admiral, to be dismissed the service, and to pay the costs of the trial.

¹ *Rendiconti delle udienze pubbliche dell' Alta Corte di Giustizia nel dibattimento della causa contro l'Ammiraglio Senatore Conte Carlo Pellion di Persano, preceduti dalla relazione della Commissione d'Istruttoria* (Firenze, 1867). The fullest Austrian account is in *Oesterreichs Kämpfe im Jahre 1866, Nach Feldacten bearbeitet durch das k. k. Generalstabs. Bureau für Kriegs-Geschichte* (Wien, 1869), vol. v. As Tegetthoff was, in 1869, at the War Office, I think it is probable that he revised this history of the naval campaign, and the sketch of his own life which accompanies it. The account given in the *Archiv für Seewesen* for 1866 must also be considered semi-official; but is much shorter, and, by so much, less perfect. There are, of course, many other Austrian and Italian accounts. Persano's own version of the story is *L'Ammiraglio C. di Persano nella campagna navale dell' anno 1866*. Confutazioni, schiarimenti e documenti (Torino, 1873). The French accounts, as given in the *Revue Maritime*, vols xviii and xix., may also be referred to; and the very interesting narrative that appeared in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* (15 Nov., 1866), and which, rightly or wrongly, has always been attributed to the Prince de Joinville.

There has been in England a tendency to believe that Persano was a victim, sacrificed to the Italians' wounded self-love : for myself, after a careful study of the minutes of the trial, I would accept the decision as just, and even lenient. It is, of course, impossible to offer at length the grounds for this opinion ; they fill a closely printed quarto of nearly 300 pages. But in a few words, nothing would more strongly support it than the opening sentences of Persano's own address in reply to the charge. He might almost have been condemned out of his own mouth.

'I cannot understand (he began) how I should be accused of having failed in my duty against the enemy's fleet, which came upon us almost before it was signalled, and whilst we were in considerable embarrassment from the fact that our ships had lately come in from a long voyage and were short of stores.'

He then enumerated a number of defects, some of which had been repaired a month before, and went on :

'So that of the eleven ironclads there were not more than four fit for a long chase. The other seven were, at best, only fit to take part in a battle, but could not be relied on for a chase ; and the more so as most of them wanted the guns and ammunition necessary for fighting with ironclads.

'If Tegetthoff had come really with a wish to fight, he would not have withdrawn as soon as we were ready to meet and attack him. I could not, of course, suppose that he had come merely to go away again ; and it was therefore my duty, in the first place, to form the fleet so as not to expose it to needless risk ; and then to oppose and attack the enemy. But instead of that, he went off after a short time, two or three hours perhaps, much to our regret, and notwithstanding the dashing conduct of our ships' companies.'

Of which, a great part is not true ; a great part irrelevant ; a great part is self-condemnatory ; and all extremely silly. It is impossible to think or speak with respect of a man who at such a critical period, when honour, perhaps life, was at stake, could give voice to such imbecile maunderings ; and so, in the words of the old sagas, he is now out of the story.

Tegetthoff's reception from his country was, as might be expected, very different. It is believed that the result of the battle had a very distinct influence on the terms of the peace which was concluded shortly afterwards and was the direct means of preserving to Austria the Dalmatian and Illyrian provinces. It may well be that this was so ; undoubtedly, had Lissa fallen, Austria would have stood in a very different position with regard to the Adriatic. But coming in a time of great depression and calamity, the moral effect of the victory was greater than any mere material advantage, and the nation and the government hastened to show honour to their champion. The news was sent to Vienna by telegraph ; and by telegraph on the very next day Tegetthoff received a message from the emperor promoting him to be a vice-admiral. Decorations were showered on him but perhaps of all these, the one most grateful to him was that sent by the Emperor of Mexico in an autograph letter, dated Chapultepec, 24 August, 1866, which ran thus :

MY DEAR REAR-ADMIRAL BARON VON TEGETTHOFF,—The glorious victory which you have gained over a brave enemy vastly superior in numbers and nurtured in grand old naval traditions, has filled my heart with unmixed joy. When handed over to others the care of the navy which had become

so dear to me, and relinquished the task of making the land of my birth great and mighty by sea, amid the clash of contending nations, I looked hopefully to you and the young generation of officers and men whom I had been proud to see growing up and striving in a noble emulation under my command. I felt deeply thankful at being able to leave to Adria so many ships—a body of which such an able staff of officers and such brave sailors constituted the soul. Although Providence has led me into another track, my heart still burns with the fire of naval glory; and bright and joyful for me was the day when the heroic fleet to which I had dedicated my youth, under your heroic leadership, wrote down, with a blood-red pen, 20 July, 1866, on the pages of naval history. For with the victory of Lissa your fleet becomes enrolled amongst those whose flag is the symbol of glory, and your name is added to the list of the naval heroes of all time. To you, the officers, and the ships' companies, I send my heartfelt good wishes; and you, as a remembrance of your admiral and friend, and as a proof of my admiration, I invest with the Grand Cross of my Guadalupe Order.

MAXIMILIAN.

After the end of the war, Vice-Admiral Tegetthoff travelled for a few months in France, England, and the United States. His visit could scarcely be called private, though in name, at least, unofficial; but he had nevertheless the direct object of seeing the great naval arsenals of those countries, and studying their organisation. He had returned from America, and was on his way to Paris, the seat, then in 1867, of a 'Great Exhibition,' when he was recalled by telegraph to Vienna. There he received the honourable though melancholy commission to go to Mexico, to reclaim from the government (if it may be so called) and bring home the body of the late Emperor Maximilian. This duty was performed, though not

without difficulty and delay raised by the government and Juarez : the body was recovered and brought to Vienna, where it now lies in the imperial vault. So great throughout Germany was the interest felt in this deep Mexican tragedy, and—notwithstanding the recent development of the North German and Austrian navies—so little familiarity is there with nautical matters, that I am barely overstating the case if I say that to the majority of even educated Germans, Tegetthoff is not so much the victor of Lissa, as the bringer home of Maximilian's body.

But his career was drawing to a close. In March, 1868, he was appointed head of the naval section of the War Office, and commander-in-chief of the navy, and this he held till his death, which took place, after a short illness, on 7 April, 1871 ; in the words of the semi-official notice—' zu fruh fur Oesterreich.'

The portraits of Tegetthoff that I have seen represent a hard Scotch type of face. I do not know how far they are to be trusted, but they are not out of keeping with his recorded character. He is described as a man of few words, emphatically a man of action, one able to execute his meaning, but not always able to tell it ; at the same time ready to speak out, and sharply too, if occasion called for it or the good of the service required it. But, as has happened to other naval officers, there were moments when he was tempted by feelings of disgust or dissatisfaction ; and once, at least, he had made up his mind to retire into private life. That he was persuaded to remain for the glory and welfare of his country, is perhaps not the least of the benefits which the Austrian navy received from the unfortunate Maximilian.

CHAPTER VI.

*PRIVATEERS AND PRIVATEERING.*¹

I. FORTUNATUS WRIGHT.

SINCE the Congress of Paris, in 1856, declared that 'privateering is, and remains abolished,' the expediency of England's assent to this, from a national as well as from an international point of view, has been often discussed. On the one side it has been alleged that such assent is a wanton sacrifice of one of our most powerful weapons; that in consequence of it we should now enter on a naval war with, so to speak, our right hand tied behind our back. On the other, it has been urged that privateering is prejudicial to our commercial interests, would tell more against us than for us, would destroy our carrying trade, would cause our ships to transfer their allegiance to other flags, is repugnant to the advanced civilisation of the age, and converts war against nations into piracy against individuals. The case as it stands gives room for a very pretty quarrel, and will probably so continue until the sharp experience of war solves the question one way or another; nor do I think it is difficult to foresee what that way will be. It is scarcely to be doubted that, when we are engaged in a

¹ *Fraser's Magazine*, October, 1881.

ropean war, our enemy will endeavour to attack us, injure us, by 'cruisers,' such as a few years ago ssia openly proclaimed her intention of fitting out; the defensive measures adopted by our own admiralty, instructions under which merchant steamers are lt and surveyed, leave as little room to doubt that we ould at least follow suit. But between such cruisers l the privateers of old there would be little effective erence. The command might be vested in regularly nmissioned officers, but it would be equally the duty these to plunder and destroy rather than to fight. The rk done would be very much the same as that which s done formerly by private men-of-war; though the isers would have a higher responsibility, would be re under control, and would add enormously to the t of the war. They would have to be paid for doing at the old privateers paid for permission to do.

Whether the system of waging maritime war against enemy's commerce is altogether advantageous is other point on which much argument has been ex- ided. That it may cripple the enemy's resources is ious; but the advantage does not necessarily lie all one side, and it may occasion serious injury to our a. In former days the treasure ships belonged to the my until they became ours by capture; in the present the treasure and the ships that carry it are English, l it is difficult to picture the consternation in the City hearing of the loss of some steamer bringing home- rd a rich freight of diamonds from the Cape or of gold m Australia. But as we clung steadfastly to the right making prize of the Spanish plate-ships, it is not to expected that any enemy which fate may now send

us will waive his claim to the English steamers, if only he has the power to assert it, and against that it behoves us to be on our guard. It seems, however, probable that, under the existing rules of the Declaration of Paris, but few large prizes will be made, such as founded many a fortune in the last or earlier centuries, when international scruples did not exist, and naval opinion was absolutely single as to the advisability and even necessity of making captures and sharing them out amongst the captors. This opinion, rooted in the 'custom' of the sea, was as old as the English nation, and had descended from the days of Hengist and Horsa, of Harry Page—the Arripay of the French chroniclers—of Drake, or Frobiser, or Lancaster, down to the times when Commodore Wager took the great galeon, or Anson gutted the Acapulco ship.

The stories of such times seem to the seaman of to-day like the fairy tales of childhood, too good to be true; but from a strictly naval point of view they have their dark side, and it is very certain that, of the quarrels between senior officers which so often disgraced our service, a great number were due, directly or indirectly, to the natural but unchivalrous desire of making money. The feud between Rodney and Arbuthnot, on the coast of North America, in 1780, was one of these. The friendly relations between Lord St. Vincent and Nelson, which led to such glorious results, were interrupted by a lawsuit on their rival claims for prize-money; and the ill-feeling which Nelson and Sir John Orde entertained for each other was at least strengthened by pecuniary considerations.¹ Lord Howe's conduct on the 'First of

¹ See Nicolas's *Nelson Despatches*, vol. vi. pp. 307, 319, &c.

June' was angrily criticised by many, as though he might have rendered the victory still more decisive had he not been over-anxious about the security of the prizes. Sir John Jervis was similarly spoken of after the battle of St. Vincent; and after the battle of the Nile, the burning several of the prizes, whose preservation would have taxed the efficiency of the fleet, appeared to Nelson a measure of very grave responsibility, as defrauding the men under his command of moneys to which they were justly entitled.¹ The bitterness which frequently arose out of considerations of prize-money was undoubtedly increased by the disproportionate share of the senior officers. Of the prizes just referred to as burnt at the Nile, Nelson estimated the share of the commander-in-chief as 3,750*l.*, of a captain as 1,000*l.*; but of a lieutenant as 75*l.*, and of a seaman as 2*l.* 4*s.* 1*d.* In face of such figures it is all very well to talk of prize-money as encouraging seamen to do their duty, but its principal use was to offer great chances to the senior officers, and its real evil was the promoting jealousy and ill-will between the flag-officers, and even the captains. This, however, naval officers would have been slow to acknowledge.

But whilst blind to the evil that not unfrequently resulted from the distribution of prize-money amongst ships of war, every officer had a keen, perhaps an exaggerated sense of the evil effects of privateering. On this point there was a unanimity so marked as to lead to a suspicion that sometimes at least it arose out of a grudge that private ships should carry off rich prizes which

¹ *Nelson Despatches*, vol. iii. p 115.

might otherwise have fallen to the king's cruisers. Privateers were of course men whose main idea in coming afloat was to make the war profitable to themselves and their owners; they had not the same responsibility as the captains of ships of war, and they were practically independent even of the commander-in-chief of the station, to whom, therefore, they were at once a source of annoyance and pecuniary loss. Vernon's opinion of them in 1740 was that they were little better than pirates. He wrote to the governor of the French Leeward Islands, who had complained of their conduct: 'Your Excellency well knows that the granting commissions to privateers is no part of my province, nor are they immediately under my control. I know too well what lawless liberties they are, in all nations, and heartily wish no nation countenanced them. And I believe your Excellency may have heard of my inclination for bringing them to answer for any of their base or treacherous proceedings, which, as far as lays in my way, I shall always give a helping hand to.'¹ And, sixty years later, Nelson's opinion was no whit more favourable. 'I have exceedingly to lament,' he wrote from the Mediterranean in 1804, 'that conduct so disgraceful to the character of the British nation is practised by the Gibraltar privateers in these seas every day, as complaints are constantly laid before me, from the government of Sardinia, of their nefarious conduct, which I have transmitted to the governor of Gibraltar for his interference, as naval commanders have no authority whatever over those pirates.' And again: 'The conduct of all privateers is, as far as I

¹ Home Office Records (Admiralty), No. 77, 12 Sept. 1740.

have seen, so near piracy that I only wonder any civilised nation can allow them.' ¹

When, therefore, it is urged, as is frequently done, that the Declaration of Paris ought to be cancelled, it is well that those who so urge should be reminded that, in the old days of privateering, whilst Liverpool or Bristol was rapidly growing rich at the expense of his Majesty's enemies, as Dartmouth or Poole had done centuries before, every naval officer, and more especially every naval officer in high position, considered the system a disgrace to civilisation, and the men who worked it as scarcely better than pirates. It is impossible to say how much of this was real hatred of ruffianly practices, how much envy of their success, how much jealousy of their independence. A naval commander is necessarily a despot, even if a beneficent one, and an armed ship carrying on independent war within the limits of his command trenches on his prerogative, and may occasionally complicate or prevent the execution of his plans. One instance of this is worth relating.

On January 27, 1781, Sir George Rodney, then commanding in the West Indies, received instructions to wage active war against the Dutch, and more especially to seize on St. Eustatius and other settlements which had been prominent in carrying on an illicit trade with the Americans. This was done at once. But whilst Rodney was arranging matters at St. Eustatius, the Dutch governor of Demerara and Essequibo, conscious of his defenceless condition, opened negotiations, as the result of which his Majesty's ships *Surprise* and *Barbuda* were sent to take possession of the colonies, and arrived

¹ *Nelson Despatches*, vol. vi. pp. 62, 79.

on 27 February. But, as the Dutch feared, they had been anticipated by a squadron of privateers, which had entered the river on the 24th, had seized on all the ships, and, with scant courtesy, had enforced a surrender of the town. They agreed that the inhabitants should remain in peaceful possession of their property, but, as the Dutch afterwards complained, their people went on shore and took everything they liked.

‘They also,’ the complaint ran, ‘released all our prisoners, white and black, some of them were under the sentence of death, which did put us in the greatest anxiety for our own negroes, who would be glad of such an opportunity to rise against the inhabitants, and which situation was represented to the captains: and what made our case more dismal was that all the passages up and down the river were stopped; by which we were prevented from sending any news up the river to put the inhabitants at ease, which occasioned the greatest uneasiness amongst the women and children, some of whom were several days in the woods, and some people who were in their boats were robbed of their baggage.’

Such as it was, however, the capture was effected by the privateers; the men-of-war had no share in the prize-money, and but small consolation in finding out that the privateers had none either, that they had no commission to attack the Dutch, and that the whole became a *droit* of the admiralty.

Many similar instances might easily be gathered. The conduct of the privateers too frequently needed palliation, which angry and disappointed naval officers were not in any humour to give, and the very name of privateer became a reproach, not only in the service but in the country at large; so that, at the present day, many a wealthy man would be almost more ashamed of

having it believed that his grandfather or great-grandfather made his money as a privateer, than that he had made it as a smuggler or a highwayman. And yet the privateers were, in their day, a most important item in the naval strength of the country, with this additional and especial merit, that they were most numerous and strongest when the royal navy was weakest or most severely taxed. Evidently the time when the king's ships swept the enemy's flag from the seas was not the best for private adventurers to go a-cruising; but when the king's ships could barely hold their own, the chances of rich prizes were numerous and tempting. It is thus that in looking for valuable services of privateers, we find them, not in the periods of our national glory, not during the wars of the French Revolution, when Howe, and Hood, and Nelson crushed the French navy; not during the later years of the Seven Years' War, when Hawke, and Boscawen, and Saunders grandly maintained England's supremacy; but during the war of American Independence, or the war of the Austrian Succession, when the fortunes of the navy were at a low ebb, and disgraceful court-martial, such as those on Keppel, or Palliser, or Brereton, on Mathews, or Lestock, or Mostyn, or Cornelius Mitchell fill a large space of our naval annals. In such times of disaster and disgrace, the rough and ready work of the privateers appeared more brilliant, and had a very real national importance. To attempt any statistical measurement of it would be difficult, if not impossible, but some idea may be formed from the statement that on 2 January, 1781, thirteen days after the declaration of war against Holland, 545 letters of marque passed the Stamp Office. The number of ships in the country was

scarcely equal to the extraordinary demand ; but the curious nature of the Dutch led them to supply it ; and just as in 1672 they sold gunpowder to the French, so in 1781 they built privateers specially for the English market.¹

It is scarcely less difficult to attempt any relation of the services rendered by the privateers, or of the bold deeds which they frequently performed ; but of the many, some few have escaped oblivion, and may be still worthy of record. Here, for instance, is one.

In July 1781, the *Tygress* of Appledore, carrying 22 six-pounders, and 130 men, whilst cruising on the west coast of Ireland, fell in with a Dutch 50-gun ship, escorting two large merchantmen, who had gone north about, to avoid the Channel. This 50-gun ship, under British colours, chased her and overtook her. The *Tygress*, being well within gun-shot, lay to, supposing that, according to custom, a number of her men were to be pressed. She found out her mistake, when the stranger, hoisting the Dutch flag, ordered her to strike. She refused to do so, and made sail, to try and escape. A running fight thus began and continued for two hours, when the Dutchman's mainmast went over the side ; and the *Tygress*, taking up a position on her bow, plied her with the six-pounders and small arms for nearly an hour ; at the end of which time, having succeeded, though with heavy loss, in clearing the wreck, the Dutch ship got round, and beat off her enemy by the superior weight of her stern guns. She was, however, in no condition to pursue ; and the *Tygress*, leaving her helpless, went to look for the two merchant ships, both of which she

¹ *Morning Herald*, 3 January, 1781.

captured the next day. They were each of about 600 tons, laden with 'masts, cordage, pitch, tar, turpentine, and other naval stores,' from Ostend to Cadiz. The money value of the prize was the privateer's only reward. Had the Tygress belonged to the navy, had a king's ship of her force beaten off a 50-gun ship and taken two large prizes from under her convoy, the commander would have been posted, and his distinguished services blazoned in our naval records. Being as it was, we can say no more than that his name was Thomas Hall.

The same might be said of Captain Devereux, commanding the Drawblood, of Milford, mounting twelve guns, which on 6 March, 1781, off Cape Clear, captured a Dutch privateer, carrying eighteen 9-pounders and one hundred men. Dutchmen do not yield readily, and it took three hours' hard fighting and the killing or wounding of sixty men, before this ship hauled down her colours. She proved to be of 700 tons burden, laden, as the others, with naval stores. The Drawblood had eleven killed and sixteen wounded—a loss on both sides which compares with or exceeds that of any single action of the war, if we except that of the Serapis and Bonhomme Richard, which neither English nor Americans are disposed to consider a single action, and in which, at any rate, the ships were of immensely greater force.¹

Scarcely less notable was the capture on 16 April, 1780, of a Spanish sloop of war by the privateer Ellen, apparently of Liverpool, commanded by Captain Borrowdale. The Ellen, which mounted eighteen light 6-pounders, and had on board sixty-four men, all told—of whom many, including a Captain Blundell of the 79th

¹ See *post*, Chap. XI.

regiment, were passengers—was making a passage to the West Indies, under orders of urgent haste. Her small complement shows that she had no aggressive intentions; but, when overhauled by the Spaniard, she prepared to defend herself. She shortened sail, and—to prevent the enemy opening fire at long range, and thus getting the advantage of a presumably heavier armament—hoisted American colours. At the same time her guns were double-loaded with round shot and grape; and Borrowdale, encouraging his men, ‘recommended to them a cool and determined courage, entreated them to fire quick, to take good aim, and to fight the ship to the last extremity.’ We seem almost to have before us the old sea-dog described by Captain Marryat:—

The Captain stood on the carronade: ‘First Lieutenant,’ says he,

‘Send all my merry men aft here, for they must list to me; I haven’t the gift of the gab, my sons—because I’m bred to the sea;

That ship there is a *Spaniard*, who means to fight with we;
That ship there is a *Spaniard*, and if we don’t take she,

’Tis a thousand bullets to one, that she will capture we.’¹

and so, as the Spaniard ranged up alongside to windward, he hauled down the American colours, hoisted the English, and poured into her his whole broadside, with volley of musketry. The astonished and entirely disabled Spaniard fell to leeward and received the Ellen’s other broadside in the same fashion, after which she put

¹ The verses, which I have here adapted, occur in *Snarley-yow*. It is curious to find a writer, with Marryat’s intimate knowledge of sea-fairs, speaking of carronades in the time of William III. They were first ordered for use in the navy in 1779. The Ellen had not any; but, 1780, she might have had, if her owners had chosen.

before the wind and endeavoured to make off. But the privateer held on to her advantage, and after a running fight of an hour and a half the *Santa Anna*, a commissioned sloop of sixteen guns—heavy 6-pounders—exclusive of swivels, and 104 men, hauled down her colours, and accompanied the *Ellen* to Jamaica.

I give these as instances of our privateers doing good and valiant services as men-of-war. Their capability of annoying or distressing the enemy in the special way for which they were licensed, has never been doubted; but, when put into figures, it appears that from the commencement of the war with France, in July 1778, to the following May—that is to say, in a period of ten months—the value of the prizes taken by Liverpool ships alone amounted to 1,025,600*l.*, of which 170,000*l.* is assigned to the Knight, and 75,000*l.* to the *Ellen*, presumably the same whose gallant action the next year I have just related. But the list to which I here refer ends before the beginning of the war with Spain, the country which had always furnished the richest prizes. War was declared on 16 June; and on 23 October, almost before the Grand Fleet of England, under an incompetent administration, had done sheltering itself behind the shoals of Spithead from the combined fleet of France and Spain, two privateers, the *Amazon* of Liverpool, and *Ranger* of Bristol, captured, off the Azores, a ship of 800 tons homeward bound from Manila. She carried eighteen guns and a complement of 150 men; but her defence would seem to have mainly consisted in a resolute attempt to escape; for though she lost heavily, her captors had only one man killed. This was a prize worth having. ‘She was deeply laden with gold, silver, silk, coffee, china,

cochineal, and indigo, and also great private adventures which were not registered. The value of the whole was supposed to exceed 300,000*l*.'

Here is part of the bill of lading of another, a ship of 700 tons, from the South Seas, captured about the same time by the *Shark* of London and *Sprightly* of Guernsey: 3 chests of doubloons, 47 chests of silver, 200,000 dollars, 1 chest of white silver, 270 marks, 9 small chests of gold, 400 tons of cocoa, 15 bales of fur, 150 tons of bar copper, and many other things.

No such prizes at this time fell to the lot of the royal navy; nor indeed, considering the small numbers amongst which they were divided, have such prizes often been taken. But my object here is not so much to tantalise our seamen with these golden memories of the past, or to make them regret that their lot is cast in an age of iron and of international forbearance; it is rather to speak of the privateers as an effective constituent of England's naval power, such as they certainly were, notwithstanding the many abuses to which the system was liable. In doing so, it would be easy to gather together a number of isolated examples; of names which, being nothing more than names, would convey little meaning and excite little interest. I prefer rather to dwell on the careers of two men, whom superior merit distinguished above all others, and of whose services romance or history, or the dusty records in Fetter Lane, have preserved some of the details.

Fortunatus Wright lives in the pages of Smollett. He is there described as 'a native of Liverpool, who, though a stranger to a sea life, had, in the war of the

Austrian Succession, equipped a privateer, and distinguished himself in such a manner by his uncommon vigilance and valour that if he had been indulged with a command suitable to his genius he would have deserved as honourable a place in the annals of the navy as that which the French have bestowed upon their boasted Du Guay-Trouin, Bart, and Thurot.' I doubt, however, whether Smollett is entirely correct in his statements regarding Wright's early life. His father, who was of Cheshire origin, was a master mariner and shipowner, and I have little doubt that Wright himself followed the sea in his youth, probably as his father's apprentice, or afterwards in command of one of his father's ships. The evidence is indeed very strong that he was far from a stranger to a sea life. William Hutchinson, for many years dock-master at Liverpool, and who, on the title-page of his 'Treatise on Practical Seamanship,' styles himself as distinctively 'Mariner'—the sort of man who, in the last century, would have divided the human race into seamen and landlubbers—speaks with evident pride of having served under Fortunatus Wright, and frequently refers to the practice of 'that great,' 'that worthy hero,' as illustrating different points of seamanship. He had, however, retired from the sea, and settled down as a merchant and shipowner. Beyond that little is known, but it is believed that he became involved in a tedious and costly lawsuit on account of one of his ships with letters of marque detaining a vessel in which the Turkey Company had an interest. In this there is possibly some confusion with a later incident, the circumstances of which are before us;¹ but at any rate we

¹ See *post*, pp. 214-6.

may accept the statement that, consequent on this law-suit, and not caring to abide another with which he was threatened, he realised his property, and left Liverpool.¹ In June, 1742, we find him in Italy, where he got into a curious, though half-comical, difficulty with the guard at the gate of Lucca. It appears that there was a standing order that all strangers coming into the town should deliver up their pistols or other firearms. Wright, being ignorant of this rule, and having but an imperfect knowledge of the language, refused to comply. On this the officer on duty, with much violence of voice and manner, ordered out the guard of twenty men, who advanced against him with levelled muskets. Wright, not to be behindhand, cocked his pistol and swore he'd be the death of the foremost of them; but then, as in ancient days—

Was none who would be foremost
To lead such dire attack :
But those behind cried ' Forward ! '
And those before cried ' Back ! '

Eventually thirty more men were ordered up, and, some way or other, the fifty managed to escape the threatened pistol shot, to seize Mr. Wright, disarm him, and convey him to the inn, where they confined him, with a guard at the door, and two sentries in his bedroom. The guard was, however, taken off immediately afterwards on

¹ For these personal details I am indebted to the kindness of Mr. Fortunatus Evelyn Wright, at present Consul for Sweden and Norway at Christchurch, New Zealand. Mr. F. E. Wright, or rather his elder brother, Mr. Sydney Evelyn Wright, formerly a paymaster in the Navy, is the lineal representative of the hero of this chapter, as well as of John Evelyn, the author of 'Sylva,' and the first treasurer of Greenwich Hospital.

the interposition of a Lucchese nobleman to whom he had introductions, and on his giving his word not to stir out; but three days later, at four o'clock in the morning, he received a message by an officer that spoke English—'That since he had been so daring as to insult the Republic by endeavouring to enter the town by force of arms, it was therefore ordered that he should forthwith leave the State and never presume to enter it again without particular permission; that there were post-horses waiting at the door of his house, as also a guard of soldiers to see him out of the territories of the Republic.' And so he was put on his way to Florence, where, or at Leghorn, I fancy that he lived for the next three or four years.¹

When war with France was proclaimed in March, 1744, the English merchants in Leghorn suffered much annoyance from the French privateers that swarmed on the coast; and it seems to have been at their instigation if not also, in the first instance at least, at their expense, that Wright fitted out the brigantine *Fame*, and waged a war of reprisals.

This is Mr. Hutchinson's account of it, written in 1777 :—

Cruising the war before last, in the employ of that great but unfortunate hero, Fortunatus Wright, in the Mediterranean Sea, where the wind blows generally either easterly or westerly, that is either up or down the Straits, it was planned, with either of these winds that blew, to steer up or down the common channels the common course, large or before the

¹ Dr Doran's *Mann and Manners*, vol. i. p. 72. A fuller account of his and other little known episodes in Wright's career is to be found in the official correspondence of Mr (afterwards Sir Horace) Mann, and of Mr. Goldsworthy or Mr. Dick, Consuls at Leghorn.

wind in the daytime without any sail set, that the enemy's trading ships astern, crowding sail with this fair wind, might come up in sight, or we come in sight of those ships ahead that might be turning to windward ; and at sunset, if nothing appeared to the officer at the masthead, we continued to run five or six leagues, so far as could then be seen, before we laid the ship to for the night, to prevent the ships astern coming up and passing out of sight before the morning, or our passing those ships that might be turning to windward ; and if nothing appeared to an officer at the masthead at sunrise, we bore away and steered as before. And when the wind blew across the channels, that ships could sail their course either up or down, then to keep the ship in a fair way ; in the daytime to steer the common course, under the courses and lower stay-sails, and in the night under topsails with the courses in the brails, with all things as ready as possible for action, and to take or leave what we might fall in with.

This manner of cruising proved successful. In the 'Gentleman's Magazine,' under date 31 December, 1746, we read : 'Came advice that the *Fame*, privateer, had taken sixteen French ships in the Levant, worth 400,000*l*.' One of these, carrying twenty guns and 150 men, had been fitted out by the French factories on the coast of Caramania, specially to put an end to Mr. Wright's cruise, but was herself captured and sent into Messina. An adventure, which savours strongly of fiction, though it is probably enough founded on fact, is related in the 'Gentleman's Magazine' for 1757, but refers to this time.

A certain Selim, an Armenian, on his passage to Genoa, had, in the usual style of the eighteenth century romances, been captured by Algerine corsairs, and carried into slavery, from which by the aid of and in company with his master's daughter, the beautiful Zaida,

he escaped on board a French private ship-of-war, then on the coast, but ordered to cruise off Malta and capture a bold Englishman called Fortunatus Wright. Ten days later they sighted Malta, and at the same time a ship which turned out to be the one they were looking for, and which they presently engaged. Selim conducted Zaida below, and stayed by her for some time; but anxious to take part in the fight he rushed on deck, was the foremost to repel the English boarders, whom he followed to their own ship, calling to the French to come on. He was speedily overpowered and thrown below. Selim's narrative continues :—

Thus I was made a prisoner, and my fair Moor left a prey to all the wretchedness of despair. After several vain attempts to board each other, the two ships parted; the French steered towards France, and I was carried into Malta. . . . The good captain whose prisoner I was, observing my despondence, ordered me to be set free, though I had killed one of his men, and when I informed him, by a Maltese interpreter, of my unhappy story, and my resolutions to go in quest of Zaida, he gave me 100 guineas and advised me to sail for England, where, though I am unhappily exiled from it, said he, you will be generously treated, and will hear the fate of the French privateer.

Shortly afterwards Selim got a passage to Bristol, where the first thing he saw was the French vessel, which had been captured by some other cruiser and sent in as a prize, and a few days later discovered his lost Zaida. The story on the face of it is a romance, but there is in it nothing impossible or even improbable. Fortunatus Wright was cruising in the neighbourhood of Malta, and his whole career, so far as we know it, was a succession of romances.

Here is another story of the same date, which we have on the authority of the first Earl of Charlemont, who says it came to his knowledge during his residence at Malta, about 1750, and was related to him 'by the most credible eye-witnesses.'¹ No names are mentioned, but there is scarcely room for doubt that the hero of it was Fortunatus Wright. He is described by Lord Charlemont as a captain, commanding an English privateer of some force, and 'of such skill and bravery, that he reigned paramount in the Mediterranean, daily sending into the port of Malta French prizes of considerable value.' In a society such as then ruled in Valetta, this stirred up much angry feeling, the Austrians or Piedmontese jeering the French or Spaniards, and many duels took place in consequence. At length the French knights, irritated beyond measure by the taunts of their adversaries, and the continued success of the English captain, determined to put a summary stop to both, and sent urgent representations to Marseilles; in consequence of which an armed vessel, of force almost double that of the Englishman, was specially equipped and sent to Malta, under the command of 'an officer of the highest character for courage and naval knowledge.' After being duly fêted by the French party he sailed out of harbour to look for the Englishman, as to a certain victory. Days passed by; both parties were aglow with expectation, and the ramparts on the sea front were constantly thronged by anxious crowds. Two ships at last appeared in sight. As they came nearer it was seen that the one was towing the other; that the one was the French ship

¹ *Memoirs of James Caulfield Earl of Charlemont*, by Francis Hardy, vol. 1 pp. 47 *et seq.*

for which they were losing what the other was much shattered. They hoisted French colours, and who so jubilant as the French knights! Amid exulting cheers they turned into the harbour, between St. Elmo and Ricasoli. All Valetta, Senglea, and Il Borgo were called to witness the triumph of the French; when—O cruel disappointment!—the white flag suddenly disappeared, giving place to the victorious flag of England. The Marseilles ship was a prize to the English privateer.

Hutchinson relates an experience of his own in 1747, but does not state whether he was then in the *Fame* with Fortunatus Wright. From the tone of his book generally, my impression is that he was, and was officer of the watch at the time; but he may have been in independent command. He says:

Cruising in the Mediterranean with the prisoners of three French prizes on board, at their entire liberty upon deck, apprehending no danger from them, upon an occasion I imprudently ordered all our sails to be clued up, and all our people upon deck to go up and hand them with all possible expedition. One of our French captains thought to avail himself of the advantage of our people being mostly aloft. I providentially, however, perceived he was going to give the alarm for his people to rise and take the ship; and putting my hand in my pocket, took hold of my pocket pistol, and ran close up to him, and told him coolly that he should be the first that should die by the attempt, which stopped his proceeding, and I calmly ordered our people to come down as fast as possible; which they did.

Meantime Wright, with a genius peculiarly his own, was becoming the focus of a series of international disputes, in themselves not uninteresting. On 19 December, 1746, the *Fame* seized a French barque, on her

way from Marseilles to Naples, carrying the servants and equipage of the Prince of Campo Florida, and furnished with a pass from the King of England. About the prince's goods and chattels there was no dispute, but the vessel's name was not mentioned in the pass, and she was accordingly sent in. The British consul was aghast at the insult, as he chose to call it, offered to his Majesty's pass; and wrote a very strong letter to Wright, who was not in the *Fame* at the time, urging on him that the French ship must be set at liberty. This Wright would not admit; but afterwards, on the representation of the minister, he consented to refer the matter to the naval commander-in-chief, who directed him to release his prize.¹ A more serious affair happened very shortly afterwards.

Early in 1747 complaints were made by the Ottoman Porte that Turkish property on board French ships had been seized by English privateers, and especially by Captain Fortunatus Wright in the *Fame*. The matter was referred to Mr. Goldsworthy, the English consul at Leghorn, with instructions to inquire into it; and, calling on Captain Wright for an explanation, he received a reply which was far from satisfactory to the Turkish merchants. The two ships named, he wrote, 'had each of them a French pass, and both of them belonged to Marseilles. They also hoisted French colours and struck them to me; nay, the latter engaged me for a considerable time under these colours. For these reasons I brought them to Leghorn, and have had them legally condemned in the admiralty court, by virtue of which

¹ Goldsworthy to Duke of Newcastle, 26 December, 1746, 2, 9, 23 January, 1747.

sentence I have disposed of them and distributed the money.’¹

The Turkey Company had, however, sufficient interest to enable them to procure an order that Turkish property on board even French vessels was not prize; and instructions to that effect were sent out both to the privateers and admiralty courts in the Mediterranean. These additional instructions were dated 30 March, 1747. Wright positively refused to allow them, in his case, to be retrospective; and having got the money, he had, above all other claims, the very strong one of actual possession. As he would not give it up, an order came out from home to have him arrested and sent to England. The Tuscan government readily lent their aid, and clapped him into prison, but there their assistance ended. They would not give him up to Mr. Goldsworthy, who vainly urged that, as captain of an English private ship, he was subject to consular jurisdiction; and so poor Wright was kept in the fortress of Leghorn for about six months, when orders came from Vienna to hand him over to Goldsworthy, who, whilst waiting for an opportunity to send him to England, received orders to set him at liberty, ‘as he has now given bail in the High Court of Admiralty to answer the action commenced against him.’

The action, however, seems to have run on to great length. The special ground of it was the seizure of Turkish property on board a French ship, *Hermione*, captured by the *Fame* on 26 February, 1747, the proceeds from which Wright refused to disgorge. He was

¹ Goldsworthy to the Deputy-Governor of the Turkey Company, 20 February, 1747.

arrested on 11 December, 1747 ; was set at liberty on or about 10 June, 1748 ; but in June, 1749, the suit was still pending ; and Wright, in a letter to Goldsworthy, dated 4 June, after a long statement of his case, concludes in no ignoble manner :

The cargo was all sold at public auction, for which I have proper vouchers ; therefore I am surprised at the manner the Turkey Company have represented this affair, or that they should trouble his Grace, after they have prosecuted me, after they had caused me to be confined near six months at their instance, and have since found their libel totally rejected, and that I am acquitted from the charge. They attacked me at law : to that law I must appeal ; if I have acted contrary to it, to it I must be responsible ; for I do not apprehend I am so to any agent of the Grand Signior, to the Grand Signior himself, or to any other power, seeing I am an Englishman and acted under a commission from my prince.

The body of this letter is in a clerk's writing ; the subscription and signature only are by Wright ; but these are sufficient to show that he wrote like a gentleman of culture and education. The hand is not of a commercial character, still less is it the hand of a rude seaman, more familiar with the marling-spike than the pen.

A year later the correspondence about the *Hermione* was still going on, with, as far as Wright was concerned, no results. • Whether it died out from exhaustion or whether it merged in some diplomatic settlement with the Porte, I do not know ; but it seems quite certain that Wright did not pay. It would, however, appear that the statement—to which I have referred—that the *Fame's* prizes in 1746 were valued at 400,000*l.*, was a gross exaggeration. Wright was owner as well as captain of the brigantine, and her ship's company must have been

small ; his share of such a sum would have rendered him wealthy ; but he does not come before us after years as a wealthy man. In 1750 he was engaged with Hutchinson, the 'Mariner,' in buying and fitting out as a merchant ship the old 20-gun ship *Lowestoft* ; and, as she made sundry trading voyages to the West Indies and to the Mediterranean, it would seem that Wright was settling down into a man of business at Leghorn, where he resided with his wife and family, though I am unable to say what degree of truth, if any, there is in his alleged statement to Selim, that he was 'unhappily exiled' from England.

When the troubled relations between France and England, in 1755 and early in 1756, foretold a speedy renewal of war, Wright prepared at once to take his part, and set about building a small vessel at Leghorn. But the interests and policy of Tuscany, closely bound up with those of Austria, were this time linked to those of France, and the neutrality professed by the Tuscan Government was in reality a very thinly-veiled partiality. On the declaration of war they at once took measures to prevent the English ships in port increasing their crews or armament, whether with a view to going a-privateering, or merely in order the better to defend themselves from attack. Wright's character was well known ; the destination of his little vessel, the *St. George*, more than suspected ; and precautions were thus, as a matter of course, taken to prevent her equipment for purposes of war. Captain Wright, therefore, with assumed candour, applied to the authorities to know what force he might take on board to leave the port as a merchant ship, and, after some consultation, this was fixed at four small guns

and 25 men. The government took every precaution to ensure this limit not being exceeded ; and Wright, in, as we must suppose, a spirit of fun, urged them to have guard boats rowing round him, to make more certain. Finally, as he took leave of the governor, he asked him if he was satisfied that he had complied with the limitation, and obtained from him a certificate to that effect.

And so he sailed out of port on 28 July, 1756 ; but with him also sailed four richly laden merchant ships, homeward bound to England, which, amongst other valuable things, carried an efficient armament and ship's company for the *St. George*. They had scarcely gained an offing, before they saw coming towards them a vessel, which they made out to be a large French xebec, known to be cruising in the neighbourhood. The guns and men were hastily sent on board the *St. George*, which then, though still very inferior to the xebec, stood towards her. The xebec, on her part, came on, expecting an easy victory. It is said, in the '*Gentleman's Magazine*,' that she had been fitted out by the merchants of Marseilles with the special object of destroying Wright, whose exploits in the last war still rankled in their memory ; it is certain that she had been waiting for him for some time ; that her captain had asked in Leghorn, ' Pray, when does Wright intend to come out ? He has already made me lose too much time ; ' that he was well informed of the very small force of the *St. George*, and counted on securing the whole five, without much difficulty. He caught a Tartar. The *St. George* had still no more than twelve guns, including the four of very small calibre with which she left Leghorn ; and her crew, got together in this way, at the last moment. numbered only seventy-five. of which

the additional fifty were men of all nations—Slavonians, Venetians, Swiss, Italians, and a few English. The xebec was of at least double the force, and had her crew presumably in efficient order; the more astonishing, therefore, the merit of Captain Wright, who plied his guns with such vigour, that the enemy attempted to carry him by boarding, but was repulsed with great slaughter, and finally took to flight, so badly treated that it was doubtful whether she would be able to get to port. Wright pursued her for some little way; but seeing another French ship making towards his convoy, he returned to cover them, signalling to them to return to Leghorn, where he also anchored the next morning.

He had scarcely done so, when he was ordered by the governor to bring his vessel within the Mole, under pain of being brought in by force. As holding a commission from the King of England, he refused; and two snows¹ were ordered to anchor alongside him, to take charge of him. The masters of the English ships in the Mole offered to haul out, and make common cause with Captain Wright; who, however, preferred putting the thing into Mann's hands. Mann immediately demanded redress from the regency. They would not give it; they complained that Wright had deceived them; had gone out with more men and arms than he had shown to the examining officers; had violated the neutrality of the port; had made an improper use of the emperor's colours, and had repeatedly disobeyed their orders to come within the Mole. Mann's position, in reply, was that he had

¹ Of vessels which in the last century were peculiar to the Mediterranean, a snow differed but slightly from a brig, a xebec had lateen sails on three masts; a tartan had only one mast, also with a lateen sail.

not deceived them: that the men and arms went out of Leghorn on board other ships; that the engagement was twelve miles outside; that the Frenchman was the aggressor; and that as to their orders, they had no business to give them; that Wright, before sailing was within their jurisdiction; that he had then complied with their instructions, and that he held a certificate to that effect from the governor; but that after sailing under the English flag and now bearing the king's commission, he owed no obedience to the authorities of Leghorn, and that their action was a gross injustice and a breach of neutrality.

And so the affair was argued for a couple of months, and might have been argued for many more, had not Sir Edward Hawke, the naval commander-in-chief, who had just been sent out to supersede the Hon. John Byng, explained his view of the matter. As soon as it came to his knowledge, he sent Sir William Burnaby in the Jersey of 60 guns, with the 50-gun ship Isis, to convoy what merchant ships were waiting, and to bring the St. George away, maugre the captain of the port, the governor of Leghorn, the regency, or the emperor himself. The governor protested; but Sir William put it, without undue periphrasis, 'that his orders were to take Captain Wright away under his protection; and in case either the barks or the forts, fired, he would be sorry to see himself under the indispensable necessity of returning shot for shot.' The governor preferred dealing with the men of the pen, and sought comfort from Mr. Dick, the consul, who, however, had none to give him, and told him 'he had heard Sir William Burnaby say he would take her away.' 'Well then,' said the governor piteously,

‘there’s an end of it ; what can we do ? the French will see it’s not our fault.’ And so on 23 September, the Jersey and Isis departed, the St. George accompanying them, and sixteen rich merchant ships, homeward bound.

Wright, being thus at liberty, after a short and fairly successful cruise, put into Malta, where, however, the partiality for the French was as dominant as at Leghorn. The English ships in the harbour were kept in the closest seclusion. ‘Our ships, persons, and colours,’ wrote one of the sufferers,¹ ‘are treated with the utmost scandal, shame, and indignity, even to the highest degree, and with such cruel severity that it is almost impossible for anybody to believe it that have not been eye-witnesses of it. . . . Captain Fortunatus Wright, of the St. George privateer, has been used here in a most barbarous manner.’ Barbarous is the writer’s way of saying arbitrary, or unfriendly. Unfriendly, for he was not allowed to buy slops and bedding for his men, of which he was sorely in need. Arbitrary, for having received on board a number of English seamen, put ashore there from ships taken by French privateers, he was ordered to land them again. He refused to do so ; he would be unworthy the commission he had the honour to bear if he delivered up British subjects who had taken refuge under the British flag ; whereupon a galley royal came and lay alongside him. Her captain told Wright his orders were to sink him, if he offered to stir an anchor, and, if he made any resistance, ‘to board him and cut every soul to pieces.’ So the men were forcibly taken out of the ship and landed, to wait for some more convenient season ; and the St. George,

¹ Captain Robert Miller of the ship Lark at Malta, to Consul Dick at Leghorn, 3 November, 1756.

without the stores she was in want of, put to sea on 22 October.

‘The large French privateer,’ wrote Mr. Miller, ‘of thirty-eight guns, and upwards of 300 men, commanded by Captain Arnoux, was in this port at the same time, and sailed just twenty-four hours after Wright, to take him, as Wright still was in sight of the port. But when the great beast of a French privateer came out, Wright played with him, by sailing round him and viewing him, &c., just to aggravate him, as Wright sailed twice as fast as him; and indeed she is a prodigious dull sailer for a privateer, and very crank.’

And beyond the fact that he cruised for some months, and made many prizes, we know little more. On 22 January, 1757, Mann wrote to Mr. Pitt that the regency had been lamenting the decay of the Leghorn trade; that he had pointed out that their gross partiality, and their violent action in the matter of *Fortunatus Wright*, were two of the causes of this decay; that, yielding to these representations, they had assured him of their intention to observe a strict neutrality; and that, on the strength of this, he had written to Captain Wright, ‘that he might send all the French prizes he had made to Leghorn, as, at my request, he had kept them in deposit till he should hear from me that he might do it with safety.’ But in two months’ time he had to write:—

‘The council sent a gentleman belonging to the Secretary’s office to me, earnestly to desire that, in order to avoid any further inconveniences with regard to him, I would order Captain Wright to keep at such a distance from the port as would not oblige the government to take any notice of his being there. . . . Finding that they thought themselves tied up by the orders they received lately from Vienna with regard to Captain Wright, I thought it my duty, purely for the sake of avoiding any new disputes, to write to the consul in the

manner they desired. The estafette was immediately sent back to Leghorn with my letter, in order that, as soon as Captain Wright's vessel appears in sight of the port, a bark may be sent off to him, with the consul's directions not to enter into the harbour.'

The end is sad enough, not only as telling the fate of a man whose whole career is more romantic than any romance, but as telling of the low ebb to which, for the moment, the incompetence of the government and the misconduct of the commander-in-chief had reduced the English power and the English prestige in the Mediterranean. Under date 2 July, 1757, Mann wrote :—

'The trade of Leghorn, upon which the wealth of this whole state chiefly depends, is reduced to the lowest ebb, insomuch that the arrival in that port of a single prize a few days ago was looked upon as an object of such importance and exaggerated by the Italians in terms that sufficiently showed that they are now convinced how much their welfare depends upon the navigation of the English merchant ships not being interrupted. The French have many tartans disguised, but well armed, that cruise between Leghorn and Porto Ferrajo, ready on all occasions to intercept such as are of no force, at the [same] time that they can run near the shore when a ship of any strength appears. A few stout privateers, as in the last war, would totally prevent this, and they would enrich themselves by the French vessels from Marseilles that would fall into their hands. Captain Wright, of the *St. George* privateer, did great service of this kind in the beginning of the war; but it is feared by some circumstances, and by his not having been heard of for some months, that he foundered at sea. Several prizes made by him have lain some months at Cagliari in Sardinia, waiting for an opportunity to get with safety to Leghorn.'

There would seem to be no doubt that Fortunatus Wright perished in the way here suggested--a man of

whom history has said but little; of whom, judging from what I have been able to recover after this lapse of time, it might have said a good deal. But the narration I have given, though wanting in many details, is still sufficient to explain the fact, recorded in the 'Gentleman's Magazine,' that the French government, and the merchants of Marseilles, or the *échelles* of the Levant, offered large rewards for his capture; and the more certain fact that, at the request of the English merchants at Leghorn, he was specially commended to the home government by Mr. Mann. Of his more purely personal history, what I have been able to collect amounts to very little. I have already said that during these last years he lived at Leghorn with his wife and family; that his handwriting is that of a man of education; and that when he first appeared at Lucca, in 1742, he was travelling as a gentleman of means, with a private servant, and letters of introduction to a Lucchese nobleman. We might thus confidently assume that he was a man of good social position, even if we did not know that his daughter Philippa married Charles, the grandson of John Evelyn of Wotton, whose daughter Susanna in due time married John Ellworthy Fortunatus Wright, her first cousin once removed. This John Ellworthy served as a lieutenant in the navy during the war of American Independence, and retired after the peace of 1783. He was accidentally killed in 1798 at Liverpool, where he was master of St. George's Dock, and where some of his descendants still reside. Others, of an elder branch, emigrated several years ago to New Zealand, where—as I understand—there is no present likelihood of the race becoming extinct.

CHAPTER VII.

*PRIVATEERS AND PRIVATEERING.*II. GEORGE WALKER.¹

IN the last chapter I related the career of Fortunatus Wright, a man who, though captain only of a privateer, did, in a time of very great abasement, nobly support the honour of the English flag in the Mediterranean. I propose now to speak of another whose name may well be paired with his—a man who resembled him alike in bravery, in success, in misfortune. His history, written by one of his followers, but modestly curtailed of almost all personal matter by himself, has come down to us.² The book is scarce, and very little known; but even in its condensed and abridged form, the narrative is one which, from the quaint simplicity of its style, the life-like character of its portraits, the rollicking, reckless nature of the adventures it describes, may compare not unfavourably with some of the most admired romances of Defoe. And I have every confidence in its truth. I have tested it in many particulars, and have convinced myself of the author's perfect honesty. Even the slight

¹ *Frazer's Magazine*, November, 1881.

² *The Voyages and Cruises of Commodore Walker during the late Spanish and French Wars.* 12mo. Dublin: 1762.

mistakes are evidence of it : they are mistakes, perhaps of mere carelessness, perhaps of imperfect recollection, very different from the class of mistakes which a clever forger would have made. I have thus felt authorised to trust to the guidance of this nameless writer, checking his narrative by reference to other accounts to which I have had access, but to which he certainly had not, and in every case with satisfaction and approval.

As to when, or where, or of what parentage George Walker was born, I have been unable to gain any information. But indirectly I am led to suppose that he was a Londoner, and of respectable, probably commercial, family. At an early age he entered the Dutch navy, and served in it in several actions against the Turks—actions of which history takes no notice, and which we may presume to have been really against corsairs in the Levant, whilst cruising for the protection of trade. Later on, he returned to England, and having acquired or inherited sufficient money to purchase a merchant ship, commanded her himself for some years.

When the war which followed the stupid excitement about Jenkins's ear broke out in 1739, he was principal owner and commander of the ship *Duke William*, trading from London to South Carolina, and in order the better to prepare for defence, or to be ready for whatever might turn up, but with no immediate intention of cruising, he took out letters of marque. His ship mounted twenty guns, but had only thirty-two men ; the object of her voyage being, in the first place, simply trade.

On arriving at his destination, he found that the coast of the Carolinas was infested by two Spanish privateers ; and, in the absence of any man-of-war,

offered his ship to the colonial government. The offer was accepted, the men put on wages as in the king's ships, and their number increased to 130. Several gentlemen of the country entered as volunteers, and Walker, in command, cleared the coast without difficulty. He took and destroyed a fortified depôt which the Spaniards had established on one of the small islands adjacent, and convinced them that their continued cruising in that neighbourhood would be more dangerous than they had expected. Towards the end of 1742 he sailed for England, having three merchantmen in convoy; but in a tremendous gale in December, whilst still 200 leagues westward of the Scilly Islands, the convoy having been scattered, the Duke William sprang a most serious leak—a number of most serious leaks, and was with great difficulty, and by incessant pumping, kept afloat, until, just at the last extremity, one of her convoy came in sight. The utterly exhausted crew were taken on board her, their ship sinking directly afterwards. The change was, however, but little for the better, and their new ship was able to keep afloat only by the aid of the additional hands at the pumps; and so with much discomfort and great danger they made the land; when, on his arrival in town, Mr. Walker found that, by some mistake, the insurance of the Duke William had been allowed to run out about two months before she foundered.

His fortune was thus at a low ebb, and for the next year he served as master of a vessel trading to the Baltic, till, in the autumn of 1744—war having been declared against France in the previous spring—he was offered the command of the Mars, a private ship of war of 26

guns and 130 men, to cruise in consort with another—the Boscawen, a larger ship belonging to the same owners. The two sailed from Dartmouth in November, and within a couple of days fell in with a French frigate of 26 guns and 270 men of force—that is, about equal to the Boscawen. This ship, however, was unfortunate in her captain: the Mars attacked the Frenchman, but was left unsupported, so that after a smart action she was beaten to a standstill; and the enemy, also roughly handled, was able to get away before the captain of the Boscawen could make up his mind to prevent him.

A few weeks later, one wild, rainy night in the beginning of January,* they came suddenly upon two large ships. So dark was it, that they did not sight them until close to them; when, by the voices and language, they knew them to be French, and, by their state of confusion and dismay, judged them to be rich Martinicomens, homeward bound. Now two rich Martinico-men would agree wondrous well with two hungry privateers, who accordingly hung on to them all night, waiting for day to make their attack. When day broke, however, they discovered them to be two ships of war, one of 74, the other of 64 guns. The Boscawen, being on the weather quarter, and having a captain gifted with a large share of prudence, immediately hauled her wind and made off; the Mars, being to leeward, was unable to do so; and going free had little chance of escaping two large vessels. The officers of the Mars thought that if the Boscawen had joined them, and the two ships had kept together, the Frenchmen would not have meddled with them, being anxious to get into Brest without any avoidable delay; but seeing the Mars by herself they could

not resist the temptation of picking up an easy prize. A signal was made from the other for the 64-gun ship to chase, which she did, and rapidly gained on the Mars. On this, Captain Walker, addressing himself to his officers and ship's company, said :—

‘Gentlemen, I do not mean to be so rash as to attempt a regular engagement with so superior a force. All I ask of you is to confide in me and my orders, to get away if possible without striking, and be assured I shall employ your assistance neither in revenge, or vainglory, or longer than I think it of use to our design. The ship which pursues us is certainly the best sailer of the enemy, by being ordered to the chase; if by good fortune we bring down a topmast or yard, or hurt her rigging, so as to retard her pursuit, we may entirely get clear.’

So, with colours flying, and firing from time to time what guns would bear, the Mars kept ahead of the 64-gun ship, which, however, continued to gain, though but slowly. The 74 too, began to come up, but it was two hours before they had so far advanced as to bring their broadsides to bear; when, as they ran out their lower tier, Walker ordered the colours to be struck, and considering that he surrendered to the ship whose first pursuit had embarrassed him, he went on board the smaller of the two. This was the *Fleurion*,¹ with her consort, the *Neptune*, homeward bound from the West Indies, carrying an enormous treasure in specie, French and Spanish combined, amounting, it is said, to near four millions sterling, and with their ships' companies almost disorganised by sickness. The captain of the

¹ Undoubtedly *Fleurion*; but by some mistake, which I cannot explain, the narrative calls her *Florissant*.

Fleuron received Mr. Walker and his officers with no more politeness than any captain of a ship of war would have shown to a privateer.

‘How dare you,’ he said, ‘in so small a ship, fire against a force like me?’

‘If you will look at my commission,’ answered Walker, ‘you will find I had as good a right to fight as you; and if my force had not been so inferior, I had shown you more civil treatment on board my ship.’

‘How many of your men have I killed?’ asked the Frenchman.

‘None at all, sir,’ was the reply.

‘Then sir,’ he continued, ‘you have killed six of mine, and wounded several. You fired pieces of glass.’

This Walker denied, but to little purpose; and he and his officers were, rudely and uncomfortably enough, penned between two guns on the main deck. The question of the broken glass was, however, inquired into, when it appeared that what had been reported as bits of glass were in reality bits of silver money; and that an Irishman had rammed a pocketful of shillings and halfcrowns into the last gun that was fired, swearing that if the Frenchmen wanted his money, they might take it and be damned. The little joke once explained, mollified the Frenchmen; the prisoners were treated with more courtesy, and in the course of the next day the relations between Walker and the captain of the Fleuron became almost friendly. It was thus that on the third and fourth days of his imprisonment, Mr. Walker had full cognisance of one of the most disgraceful incidents in the history of the British navy.

At daybreak on Sunday, 6 January, 1745, the two

Frenchmen, with the Mars in company, were seen and chased by four English ships of the line. The Frenchmen were in much alarm, for their treasure was enormous, and their crews, enfeebled by pestilence, were in no condition to defend it. The captain of the Fleuron spoke frankly enough of their danger, telling Mr. Walker that he had at the time thought it ill-judged of the commodore, under the peculiar circumstances, to lose time and distance over an object so paltry as the Mars ; but for that confounded chase, they would have been now well-nigh into Brest.

Shortly after, as the English ships were fast gaining on them, Mr. Walker was sent below; and though permitted from time to time, as the action did not begin, to visit the deck, it was not till the following evening, when the danger was over, that he was allowed full liberty. What happened during these two days was briefly this : One of the ships, the Captain, of 70 guns, turned aside to run down and take possession of the Mars. Another, the Sunderland, a 60-gun ship, carried away her main-topmast, and dropped astern out of sight. The other two, the Hampton Court, of 70 guns, and the Dreadnought, of 60, continued the chase ; the Hampton Court came up with the flying enemy, ranged alongside, but waited for the Dreadnought's coming up, to engage ; but the Dreadnought was a dull sailer, and could not get up ; so the Hampton Court shortened sail to wait for her. The same thing was repeated again and again ; till, on the afternoon of the second day, the English ships gave over the pursuit as useless. As a matter of course, the captain of the Hampton Court was afterwards tried by court-martial ; but, almost equally as a matter of course

—in the then existing state of naval discipline—he was pronounced to have ‘done his duty as an experienced good officer and as a man of courage and conduct.’ The minutes of this court-martial were published at the time, and excited much controversy, public opinion by no means accepting the decision of the court as satisfactory. When philosophic readers of history are nowadays disposed to consider the execution of Byng, twelve years later, as unjustifiable or unnecessary, they ought to remember that a number of cases such as the one I have here referred to had forced the Parliament to pass a new Naval Discipline Act, in 1749; and that, supported by this, the accumulated wrath of years fell on Byng as a first example; a second was not found necessary.

But meantime the Neptune and Fleuron, with much exulting and self-glorification, got safely into Brest, where the officers of the Mars were landed as prisoners at large. The very next day, Mr. Walker was writing to his friend, the captain of the Fleuron, begging that he might have back his letter of credit, which had been impounded along with his other papers, when people came running into the inn, crying that the Fleuron had been blown up, and that all her crew had perished. This was in the main true. As a first step towards clearing out the ship, the gunner had sent the greater part of the powder on shore, leaving, however, four barrels still in the magazine, and a good deal of loose powder which had been spilled in emptying back the cartridges. Whilst the men were sweeping this together, a glass lantern which hung in the gun-room was handed down to them. The handle of it gave way; the lantern fell on the deck and was smashed. The lamp rolled

amongst the loose powder, which acted as a train leading to the four barrels. The after part of the ship was blown up, and with it, the captain, the officers, and a great part of the ship's company. The rest took refuge in the fore part of the ship, which almost immediately burst into flames and burnt with great fury. By some extraordinary neglect the guns had been left loaded, probably since the meeting with the Hampton Court, and now discharged themselves in quick succession, as the fire reached them. Boats from the shore were thus afraid to venture to the assistance of the refugees, the most of whom perished miserably; and the wreck, having burnt to the water's edge, went down, taking with it the treasure and everything else on board, nothing having been discharged, excepting the fatally insufficient part of the powder.

Mr. Walker's letter of credit was thus lost, and his party consequently threatened with some inconvenience. They were, however, able to arrange matters in a satisfactory manner, and, after some pleasant adventures, to negotiate an exchange, and to return to England within a little more than a month; when they found that the Mars had been bought in by her former owners, who were fitting her out for another cruise with the Boscawen. They had, however, resolved not to employ again the former captain of the Boscawen, and now offered the command to Mr. Walker, and at his suggestion appointed his late first-lieutenant to be captain of the Mars.

The Boscawen had been the French frigate *Médée*, and captured by Boscawen in the Dreadnought, almost immediately on the declaration of war. She had then carried twenty-six nine-pounders, and a complement of

238 men; but Walker now thought proper to increase her armament to thirty guns, many of them twelve-pounders, and to give her a complement of 314 men, making her, of course, more powerful as a fighting ship; though, as was afterwards proved, her scantling was not strong enough for the increased weight. Her equipment being finished before that of the Mars, she put to sea by herself on 19 April, 1745, and four days later, on the edge of the Soundings, fell in with the privateer Sheerness, mounting twenty-two guns. The next morning, 25 April, at daybreak, they sighted eight ships in company, and gave chase. The Boscawen, which sailed remarkably well, left the Sheerness far behind; and the eight ships, which were French, seeing only one of the enemy coming up, formed line and waited for her. These were all privateers, and though on a much smaller scale than the Boscawen, carried in the aggregate about 120 guns, most of them probably three- or four-pounders, and 400 men. The largest of them was in the middle, and the Boscawen receiving the fire of the sternmost ones, reserved her fire till she was abreast of this, when she poured in a heavy broadside. It was stoutly returned; five others of the French ships clustered round her, raking her ahead and astern and firing into her as they best could; so that for a time the Boscawen was closely pressed. But after three-quarters of an hour the largest of the enemy, to which her principal efforts had been devoted, drew out of the fight, hauled down her colours, and presently sank. It was impossible to render any assistance, for four of the others continued the engagement. The fifth, the smallest of all, had previously struck, and now did what she could to succour

the drowning men ; but she was only able to pick up sixteen out of a complement of eighty-four. After another three-quarters of an hour the Sheerness came up, and the enemy, having had enough of the Boscawen, waited for no further attack. Two of them had made off at the beginning, and the largest was sunk ; but the other five were taken possession of ; and Walker, finding all the prizes, as well as his own ship, much shattered, and having also some 220 prisoners, resolved to put into the first port, and anchored in King's Road, Bristol, on 30 May.

Two months later he sailed again, but under circumstances that the superstitious nature of seamen in the middle of last century rendered awkward. There was an old story of the French prisoners, when the *Medée* was captured, that the wife of a gunner had been murdered on board ; and this now cropped up again, when a seaman of good and sober character declared that he had seen a ghost which told him the ship would be lost. It was not without great difficulty that Walker got his men reassured ; and even then, from time to time, the old terror returned, and the cruise was not successful. They met few ships, and what they did meet were not prizes ; they got into trouble at Madeira, where some of the men, in silly and ignorant jest, visited a church and put some soot into the holy water ; and, cruising from there to the northward, they got into a gale of wind.

It was by this time December ; the scantling of the ship was slight for her size, her planks insecurely fastened with iron nails whose heads were rusted away ; her guns were too heavy for her strength, and she

suffered a violent shock from the fall of her main-yard, the rope that supported it (strap of the jeer-block) having given way. She thus leaked like a sieve; it was impossible to keep her dry; it was soon deemed impossible to keep her afloat. Walker consented therefore to make the best of his way to the nearest port; but the men, panic-struck and mindful of the ghost, formed a design to seize the boats. This was frustrated by the captain's watchfulness; but from that time 'he never quitted the quarter-deck, nor once lay down for seven days, sleeping only as he stood, leaning on the barricade or rail of the quarter-deck; for the men watched every motion and every word, and, had he disappeared a minute, it is believed the duty of the ship had stopped, the officers themselves sometimes being as desponding as the men.' And thus, after twelve days of extreme danger, they made St. Ives, on the coast of Cornwall. Boats at once put off to their assistance, and towed the ship into the bay; but her anchors had been cut away long before, and she was extremely deep from the quantity of water in her hold; it was thus impossible to anchor her in the roadstead, and difficult to tow her within the pier. This last they attempted to do, but, with the heavy sea rolling into the bay, she was thrown to leeward, and struck on the rocky shore, parting asunder as she touched. The land was fortunately near, and a great number of boats close at hand, so, one way or another, all the men were picked up, except four; and of these, three had seen, or had persuaded themselves that they had seen, the ghost. Walker's ill-success did not, however, stand in the way of his career; it was known that, but for his determination and conduct, the loss would have been a disaster,

and he was presently asked to undertake a much more important command.

During the summer of 1745 a number of London merchants had fitted out three large privateers, which had cruised in company, under the command of a Captain Talbot as commodore. Their success had been enormous.¹ The share of each seaman amounted to 850*l.*; that of the officers in proportion. The owners received the sum of 700,000*l.*, which, as the rebellion in Scotland was just breaking out, they offered as a loan to the government. Captain Talbot's share would seem to have dulled his appetite for adventure. He now joined himself to the number of the owners, who resolved to fit out a still more powerful squadron, the command of which they offered to Captain Walker. The fame of Captain Talbot's success, and Walker's reputation, 'drew together such numbers of seamen to offer themselves, that near as many were refused as would have manned a like number of ships, though at this time there was a great scarcity of hands, both in the government's and merchants' service.' There was thus little delay in completing the equipment, and by the end of April, the four ships, *King George*, *Prince Frederick*, *Duke*, and *Princess Amelia*, styled collectively, the *Royal Family*, were ready to sail from Bristol. They carried in the aggregate 122 guns and 970 men. In going out the *Prince Frederick* took the ground, and the others, having waited for her till 3 May put to sea without her.

On the 11th they saw a large fleet to leeward, and drawing nearer, made them out to be merchant ships under the convoy of several ships of force, which, how-

¹ Beatson's *Naval and Military Memoirs*, i. 294.

ever, were all to leeward of them. Walker saw his opportunity and continued his course towards them. They turned out to be the English outward-bound trade, for Newfoundland and the West Indies, with the Milford and Rye, ships of war. Walker went on board the Rye, to inform the captain of the whereabouts of three French men-of-war he had seen the day before; and in course of conversation pointed out that had he been a Frenchman, or, being English, had the fleet been French, he could have made any number of prizes, and brought them off in spite of the convoy. 'True, sir,' answered the captain (his name was Craven), 'and what censure would have fallen on his Majesty's officers! And yet, let me do all I can, these masters of common vessels who sail better than the rest will keep to windward; for as to firing at them, I have done it till I am tired, and may fire away every shot in the ship.' In this instance, Walker, stretching to windward, compelled the convoy to bear down under the lee of their escort; but similar misconduct was the rule of ships under convoy all through last century, and was the direct cause of several serious misfortunes.

The men had been engaged for eight months, and at the end of that time, the Royal Family put into Lisbon, having made prizes estimated at considerably over 220,000*l.*, without the loss of a single man. There the ships refitted, and the majority of the men entered for another period of eight months; the place of those who did not do so was easily filled up, and on 10 July, 1747, the Royal Family again put to sea, being increased to six by the addition of the Prince George, and of the Prince Edward tender. Three days afterwards the Prince

Edward foundered by reason of a curious accident. Being in chase of a number of strange ships, and crowding sail, the heel of her mainmast started out of the step; and the mast forcing its way through the ship's bottom, and at the same time falling aft, sent her down immediately, stern first. Her commander and two men only were picked up.

After many interesting and exceedingly lucrative adventures, the squadron put into Lagos Bay to water, and about five o'clock on the morning of 6 October, the King George and Prince Frederick, having filled up, were standing out of the bay, when they sighted a large ship coming in towards Cape St. Vincent. The commodore immediately made the signal to chase. He himself, in the King George, of 32 guns and 300 men, tried to cut her off from the land; the Prince Frederick, of 26 guns and 260 men, to keep to seaward of her; the Duke and Prince George, which were far to the eastward, but still in sight, crowded sail after them; and a settee, acting as tender to the King George, was sent in to hurry out the Princess Amelia, which was still engaged in watering. 'The chase,' says our narrator, 'seeing herself likely to be hemmed in by the King George and Prince Frederick, was obliged to bear away, making all the sail she could to the westward, without doubt taking us for larger ships than we were, whilst we took her for a less than she really was.'

What she really was, was the Spanish line-of-battle ship *Glorioso*, of 70 guns and 700 men. From first to last she had a strange adventurous voyage. Whilst homeward bound from the Spanish main with an enormous amount of treasure, said to be three millions, on

board, she had been met near the Azores by the English ships *Lark* of 40, and *Warwick* of 60 guns. The *Warwick* attacked her manfully enough, but, being unsupported by the *Lark*, was reduced to a wreck, her masts shot away, or crippled, her rigging cut to pieces, and the *Glorioso* pursued her way. The captain of the *Lark*, who was the senior officer, was tried by court-martial and cashiered; but the mischief had been done. A few days later, the *Glorioso* fell in with the *Oxford* of 50 guns, in company with the *Shoreham* frigate and *Falcon* sloop; but these, recognising her as of superior force, left her alone; conduct for which a court-martial afterwards honourably acquitted them. And so the *Glorioso* got safely into Ferrol, where she landed her precious freight, and had sailed thence for Cadiz, when, as has just been said, she was sighted off Cape St. Vincent by the Royal Family.

The ships, as already detailed, continued to chase, and about noon the *King George* came up with her. As she did so, it suddenly fell a dead calm; and the two ships lay within gunshot of each other—the *Prince Frederick* being some distance to the southward, and the others out of sight astern. Thus lying, the Spaniard hoisted her colours, and ran out her lower tier, thereby showing that she was a 70- or 74-gun ship; but there was no wind to blow out her colours, or permit it to be seen whether they were Spanish or Portuguese.¹ In this state of uncertainty, and anxious, even if the stranger was Spanish, to have the assistance of her

¹ At that time both ensigns were white, with the royal arms in the middle. Evidently, in a calm, it would be difficult or impossible to distinguish them.

consorts, the King George made no sign, but waited for the chase to take the initiative. Why, on the other hand, the Glorioso did not fire at the King George as at a target, it is impossible to say. Her treasure having been landed, she had no uneasiness on that score; and her heavy scantling and weight of metal made her, in any comparison of force, superior to the whole Royal Family together. She ought assuredly to have begun by sinking the King George. But she did not; and after about an hour of apparent indecision, ran in her lower tier and shut her ports.

On board the King George, meantime, there was some speculation as to what the stranger was; but the general opinion was that she was a moneyed ship homeward bound from the West Indies; and this was confirmed when, as, about five o'clock, a light breeze sprang up from the northward, she again put her head to the east. The King George followed, but, the wind being extremely light, did not come up with her till eight o'clock. The Prince Frederick, not having got the breeze so soon, was still far astern, and the others were quite out of sight, even if it had been daylight. The moon shone brightly and concealed neither the insignificance of the one nor the huge bulk of the other, as the King George, ranging alongside the Glorioso, hailed her in Portuguese; she received no answer. She hailed again in English, and was answered in English by a cross question, demanding the name of the ship. On her reply, the Spaniard, without further word or notice fired his whole broadside, dismounting two of the King George's guns, and bringing down her maintopsail yard. This 'salute' was not unexpected nor unprepared for; the men were lying down

at their quarters, and jumping up, returned it before the sound was well out of the guns; and thus began a battle that has absolutely no parallel in naval history.

There are plenty of instances of a frigate hanging on to and embarrassing the retreat of a line-of-battle ship, detaining her till some heavier ship came up. Thus, in 1756, the English 60-gun ship *Warwick* was brought to bay by the French frigate *Atalante*; thus, in 1795, the *Berwick* of 74 guns was captured by the action of the *Alceste*; and thus, in 1800, was the French *Guillaume Tell* of 80 guns delayed and finally captured by the pertinacity of the *Penelope*. Other noteworthy actions have there been between frigates and ships of the line; as when, in 1781, the French *Minerve* defended herself for an hour against the 74-gun ship *Courageux*, being aided by the heavy sea, which prevented the *Courageux* opening her lower deck ports. But I know of no instance except the present in which a frigate of any nation voluntarily placed herself, in smooth water and fine weather, alongside an enemy's ship of the line and engaged her yard-arm to yard-arm; and that this frigate should be a much-despised privateer makes the affair still more remarkable. The narrator of Captain Walker's voyages has tried to explain the peculiar circumstances which rendered such an engagement possible. He says:

The Spaniards repeated their firings with incessant warmth, but not with a continued execution; for, though they fired as fast as they could, yet their firings after the two first broadsides were extremely irregular, only firing four or six guns at one time, owing, we may suppose, to the great weight of their guns, which made them less governable than ours were to us. And in this we had the advantage of them from our nearness;

for as we continued to fire our broadsides so equally regular and well throughout the whole engagement, that the last was near as good as the first, not a shot could possibly miss them ; and thereby, also, the fire of our small arms took place, which, like a storm of fiery hail, beat against the enemy with such incessant force that, as we were afterwards informed, they fled from their quarters more than once. . . .

All which amounts to little more than saying that a 12-pounder is lighter than a 24, and a line-of-battle ship is easier to hit than a frigate ; statements which may be accepted as true, without admitting that they explain the very remarkable facts of the engagement. One condition alone was in the frigate's favour. The Spanish ships of that time, and through the century, were remarkably large, stout, and roomy ; but their ports were so small that they could not admit heavier ordnance than 24-pounders, and their sides were so thick that the angle of training or depression was unduly limited ; and it might thus quite well happen that a very inferior vessel, being outside this angle, could be reached only by an occasional shot. Nevertheless, after about three hours, the position of the King George began to get critical. Most of her running rigging was cut to pieces ; her maintopsail yard was shot away, her foremast quite disabled, the mainmast badly wounded. ' We could not work our ship, and bravery became a virtue of necessity.' There was all this time so little wind that it was half-past ten before the Prince Frederick came up and drew off some of the enemy's fire. She did more—she put the enemy to flight ; for the Glorioso, not caring to continue the fight with two, when one had kept her so well employed, made sail at eleven o'clock, and so left them.

The English loss of men was trifling compared with what might have been expected: the King George had but one man killed and fifteen wounded, though of these seven afterwards died; the Prince Frederick had three men severely wounded. The King George was, however, so shattered that Captain Walker would not run the risk of ordering the Prince Frederick to hang on to the flying enemy: it was too possible that he might himself stand in need of her assistance. But with the morning the state of the King George was less threatening, and the Duke and Prince George having also come up, Walker sent the three in chase of the Spaniard, following slowly in his own ship. *

And shortly, coming in from the eastward, was seen a large ship. After an anxious hour, she was made out to be an English man-of-war—a ship of the line; and Walker, to save time, sent one of his little tenders to her with a note, hastily explaining the situation. She was found to be the 80-gun ship Russell, homeward bound from the Mediterranean; and her captain, Buckle, sending a verbal message to Walker, thanking him for his intelligence, crowded sail in pursuit. After the Russell came the Princess Amelia, which also was sent on; and so, pursued and pursuing, they passed away to the westward, the crippled King George being left a long way astern. And suddenly her anxious officers saw the flying enemy in hot action with the headmost ship. This they took to be the Prince Frederick, but the distance was too great to make her out. The fire was exceedingly brisk. Walker was inclined to blame her captain for engaging so determinedly without support, and said, ‘Dottin will fire away all his cartridges and be obliged

to load with loose powder, by which some fatal accident may happen.' The words had scarcely left his lips, when the ship at which their eyes were straining appeared a pillar of smoke. 'Oh, Heavens!' he cried, 'she's gone. Dottin and all his brave fellows are now no more.'

The ship was indeed blown up, but she was not the Prince Frederick. The Dartmouth, of 50 guns, cruising to the westward, had heard the firing of the previous night, and was plying to windward to see what it was all about. She thus fell in with the Glorioso, and engaged her in a running fight, which, as the two ships closed, gradually became warmer, until by some accident, never explained, the fire reached her magazine, and she blew up. The Prince Frederick, then fast coming up, had her boats out at once, but of the 300 that formed her crew fourteen only were saved. One of these, a young lieutenant named O'Brien, a cadet of the Inchiquin family, had been blown out through a port, and was picked up insensible on top of a floating gun-carriage. He recovered himself as he was being taken on board, and greeted Captain Dottin with the light-heartedness once supposed to be a national characteristic. 'Sir,' he said, 'you must excuse the unfitness of my dress to come aboard a strange ship; but really I left my own in such a hurry that I had no time to stay for a change.' Appalled, we may believe, by the fate of the Dartmouth, the privateers ventured no further attack, though they still continued the chase; but about one o'clock in the morning the Russell came up alongside and within pistol-shot of the flying enemy. A couple of guns, fired rather as a summons to surrender, were responded to by her

broadside; and the action, thus begun, continued with great warmth for nearly five hours, when, about six o'clock, the Spaniard's maintopmast was shot away, upon which he directly struck.

All the time of the engagement (wrote Captain Buckle in his official letter) we were within musket-shot of each other. Both ships are in a very shattered condition: all my stays and backstays, a great many of my shrouds, and the boats shot through and through. I called to them to get out theirs, but they was in the same condition, which obliged me to stay until one of the privateer's boats came on board, when I immediately sent her away for the captain. . . . The time of the action I was greatly put to it, having but 400 men when I begun, Mr. Byng¹ having stripped me to that number when I left him, and twenty of them were sick and not able to come to their quarters. Upon this consideration, being so very weak, and their numbers so much superior, I have sent away the Prince George privateer with 230 of the prisoners, to Lisbon, under the convoy of her consort the Prince Frederick, with a letter to our minister there relating thereto. I have also taken 100 of the privateersmen on board me, and sent away the same number of our own on board the prize. I find myself obliged to leave between 300 and 400 of her seamen to help work her, but have this day taken out all the powder to prevent their doing any mischief.

The very weak state of the Russell will partly explain why the Glorioso, which did not destroy the King George, was able to make such a long defence against an 80-gun ship; but the Spanish 70-gun ships of that date were extremely stoutly built, and thus capable of a great deal of passive resistance. Notwithstanding her heavy armament, her offensive powers were clearly

¹ The Honourable John Byng, then (in 1747), as nine years afterwards, to our woe, commander-in-chief in the Mediterranean.

very limited, which may have been due to the causes spoken of above. Her guns may have been, in some measure, masked when in action with smaller vessels; and it would appear, from the report of Captain Erskine of the Warwick, as well as from the experience of Captain Walker, that her powder was bad—spoiled possibly from careless stowing whilst in the tropics. It is only thus that I can interpret Captain Erskine's attributing his small loss in men, though his rigging and masts were cut to pieces, not only to—

First, the enemy being a much higher ship, so his upper deck shot on a level must have gone over us in close engagement, which is the reason we suffered so much in our rigging, mast, and sails; and as it was night, he did not perceive the advantage of his height for his small arms. Second, his endeavouring to dismast us to facilitate his escape.

But also to—

Lastly, his overcharging his guns with too great weight of shot, that but few of them came through our sides, although most part of the engagement we were within pistol-shot.

And the historian of Mr. Walker's voyages, whilst dwelling most especially on reasons similar to the first and second of these, speaks also of the enemy's shot as not having force to come through, but sticking in the ship's side.

The King George was nevertheless a great deal knocked about, and put into Lisbon to refit, her consorts being directed to return to their cruising ground. Of course their chagrin was great when they learned that the Glorioso—which was said to have three millions sterling on board—had landed her treasure at Ferrol; but it was the fortune of war, and they were doubtless

to some extent consoled by the reflection that they had worthily assisted in bringing such a powerful enemy to action. One of their owners, however, who had come out to Lisbon, did not take quite the same view; and going on board the *King George* almost as soon as she anchored, 'gave Mr. Walker a very uncouth welcome for venturing their ship against a man-of-war.' 'Had the treasure,' said Mr. Walker, 'been aboard, as I expected, your compliment had been otherways; or had we let her escape from us with that treasure on board, what had you then have said?'

After some months more cruising, without any notable occurrence, peace was concluded, and, his ship having been disposed of at Lisbon, Mr. Walker returned home in the packet, which, on the passage, he, by presence of mind and 'bounce,' preserved from an Algerine corsair. Afterwards, he commanded a ship in the North Sea trade; but, having lost what money he had accumulated, and having got involved in a dispute with his former owners about the accounts of the Royal Family, as to the circumstances of which we have no details, he was by them imprisoned for debt shortly after the outbreak of the Seven Years' War, and kept in durance vile during its continuance. His career may thus be considered as having closed with the brilliant episode of the capture of the *Glorioso*. Of his further life I have no account; but a notice in the *Gentleman's Magazine* tells us that he died on 20 September, 1777.¹

I have related the career of Commodore Walker at this length, because it seems to me to afford a remarkable and typical instance of the good service which a privateer

¹ *Gent. Mag.* vol. xlvii. p. 460.

was capable of rendering, not only by destroying the commerce of the enemy—though the value of the prizes made by the Royal Family was said to amount to 400,000*l.*—but, and more especially, by supplementing the work of the royal navy. It is admitted that privateers are not to be employed in future wars. The name, at least, is abolished : the reality, in its more important characteristics, will, I do not doubt, revive on the first pinch. If the ships of the royal navy prove insufficient in number for the requirements of a maritime war, they will assuredly be supplemented in the future, as they have been in the past, by the ships of private owners.

It seems, therefore, most desirable that the relationship between the navy and the merchant service should be re-established on something like its former footing. Formerly, an officer of the merchant service could enter the navy, be rated at once as a midshipman, and after two years be made a lieutenant ; the number who did so enter, and serve as midshipmen, master's mates, masters, and lieutenants, was considerable. If few rose beyond the rank of lieutenant, it was that they were stopped by want of interest rather than by their antecedents ; and a sufficient number did rise to accentuate the possibility. Formerly, also, on the other hand, an officer of the navy, in time of peace—if a poor man, as a naval officer very commonly is—took service in a merchant ship, almost as a matter of course. He earned his living, he cultivated his professional knowledge ; and when war again broke out, he was as ready as ever

To point the guns upon the chase,
And bid the deadly cutlass shine.

This is—unfortunately, as I think—a thing of the

past. Nowadays, when a naval officer finds it difficult to get employment—a difficulty that in time of peace is of common occurrence—he retires; he goes into trade, he becomes a stock-broker, a wine merchant, an ironmonger, a grocer, a director of companies, or what not? He earns his living—sometimes; but the quarter-deck knows him no more. It is not only that he has been taught from his boyhood to look down on his brothers of the merchant service; it is that they also, by a feeling of reciprocity, are doubtful about him. On this point I may quote the words of Sir Donald Currie:

An immense additional advantage by way of strength to the Royal Navy and to our maritime power would be drawn from the union of the Mercantile Marine with the Royal Navy, in the event of war. At present, there is so much jealousy between the services, that naval officers cannot get employment in merchant shipping to the extent to which their merits entitle them. The captain or officer of a merchant ship has no chance of joining the navy. But this interchangeableness or harmony of action would engender such feelings of mutual sympathy and support as would present a power of vital energy and patriotic vigour such as Russia, France, or Germany can never be expected to display.¹

I fully believe, with Sir Donald, that the gain to the country by thus drawing closer the bonds between the two services, would be enormous—an increase of power and efficiency which might prove of the most vital importance. I believe also that it would conduce to another gain of very great and real, though, as compared to the increase of efficiency, of secondary importance—it would, and more and more each year, tend to reduce the

¹ *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution*, vol. xxiv. (1880), p. 92.

naval estimates, now swollen, in time of peace, to something like eleven millions sterling. The retired pay of officers who have been virtually driven out of the service by the necessity of living, however small it may be to the individual, amounts, in the aggregate, to a very large sum. If war was declared and our fleet suddenly increased, the active list of all ranks would have to be increased in proportion. Juniors would have to be promoted by hundreds. War, in the present day, however sharp and decisive, would probably be short; and on the return of peace—with or without honour—the overloaded list would be again reduced by some system of retirement similar to that previously enforced. The country would thus have to pay, not only its officers for doing the work, but also a very large and continually increasing number for not doing it; would, in short, be taxed in order to maintain the gulf between the queen's and the merchants' service. But if this gulf is itself an evil, why should it be maintained? I believe that it is an evil, and that it might be done away with—not by any violent or radical innovation, but rather by a judicious return to the practice of the past. The exclusiveness, which I deplore, is itself the innovation; a thing but of yesterday—of yesterday, that is, as compared to the age of our navy, which I love to trace back beyond the times of the Tudors, beyond the times of Ethelred or Alfred, back even to those early times when our rude forefathers scoured the North Sea, and made 'the Saxon shore' no safe dwelling-place for folk of Welsh blood or unfriendly tongue.

CHAPTER VIII.

*THE FRENCH PRIVATEERS.*I. JEAN BART.¹

IN one of the most solid of his essays,² Mr. (not then Lord) Macaulay drew an interesting and instructive comparison between the policy of the Church of Rome and that of the Church of England, in respect of their treatment of enthusiasts—a class of men whom the one converts into dangerous enemies, the other into grateful and energetic supporters. ‘The Church of Rome,’ he said, ‘unites in herself all the strength of establishment and all the strength of dissent. With the utmost pomp of a dominant hierarchy above, she has all the energy of the voluntary system below.’ A man may be vulgar, ignorant, and extravagant, yet ready to do and suffer things which it is for her interest that somebody should do and suffer. ‘She accordingly enlists him in her service, assigns to him some forlorn hope, and sends him forth with her benediction and applause.’

If it were allowable to do so, a somewhat similar comparison might be made between the naval systems of France and England. Notwithstanding its popular

¹ *Fraser's Magazine*, March, 1882.

² *Banke's History of the Popes*.

origin and national growth, notwithstanding the glories of the Elizabethan age, and the stout-hearted if unscrupulous service of men like Drake, or Hawkyns, or Frobiser, the English navy, becoming, during the last two hundred years, more and more a close body, has ended by excluding from its ranks all talent, all genius, all energy, except that which has been regularly cultivated within itself. This exclusiveness has, undoubtedly its advantages. In a service like ours, scattered, in peace, all over the world; whose captains have frequently to take on themselves diplomatic or political functions, to exercise magisterial powers, to decide on questions of national right or international law, it is well that its officers should be trained by a strict and uniform education and discipline to the performance of the many and varied duties which may, without warning, be thrust upon them. There is thus a tendency for them to become more and more citizens of the world; for their conduct to be judged at home by their tact and delicacy in settling disputes abroad, without trouble to the government or excitement to the newspapers.

It is, no doubt, a very great convenience to a government to have such a body of diplomatic agents spread over the world. But, after all, the first requirement for the navy is efficiency in war; as compared with that, every other quality is of little value; and there is perhaps room to think that this, in its fullest extent, is not to be obtained by barring a seaman from fighting for his country, because the accident of his birth and upbringing has kept him clear of her Majesty's training ships. The rule, though more absolute now than ever before, is no new one. Early in last century it was

ordered that no one should be made a lieutenant unless he had served six years at sea, two of them in the rating of midshipman on board one of his Majesty's ships; and this regulation was seldom broken through—never, perhaps, without some quibble which family interest suggested and permitted. The rule gradually changed itself into one still stricter: it became customary to require six years' service in the navy as a qualification; and though this was done without admiralty order, the examining officers commonly enough enforced it.

In 1740 it was proposed to Mr. Walker—whose fortunes I have related in the last chapter—to enter the king's service. He refused; for, by the regulations, he could not enter in any capacity higher than midshipman; and even as a lieutenant, he would have been loth to serve except in an independent command. But Walker was undoubtedly a man who, under a more elastic system, might have proved a worthy compeer of Saunders or Saumarez or Brett. Another and similar instance is that of Captain Phillips, of the *Alexander* privateer, whose name was a good deal talked of in 1746. His Majesty's ship *Solebay*, of 20 guns, had been picked up on the coast of Portugal, in the summer of 1744, by the French fleet under M. de Rochambeau, and had been since fitted out as a French ship of war. On 10 April (O.S.), 1746, she was standing into St. Martin's Road, in the Isle of Ré, in convoy of a ship laden with naval stores, when she was sighted by the *Alexander*, chased, and captured. The account given to the admiralty, by Captain Phillips himself, was that he came up with the *Solebay* just at the entrance of the road, and boarded her athwart the bowsprit, sword in hand, and cut her

out, about 3 P.M. ; the wind at S.S.W., fair for his running in and coming out. He was asked how many men she had on board, and answered ' that she had 230, and he had but 140 ; that they kept a very bad look-out, but as soon as he boarded her they were forced to fly from their quarters ; they killed fifteen of her men, and he lost but three.' ¹

A private letter from Mr. Legge,² one of the lords of the admiralty, to Anson, who also was a member of the board, adds, ' The king has been spoken to in relation to Captain Phillips, who retook the *Solebay*, and is so well satisfied with his behaviour, that he gives us leave to reward him as we think proper. In all respects the action seems to be as gallant as one need wish to see in a summer's day. Phillips himself is very desirous to be made a captain in the king's service. But this, we suppose, you will have a great objection to, as well as we have. Medals and money, we think, should be given liberally, and should be glad of your thoughts, and his Grace's (the Duke of Bedford, then first lord of the admiralty), if with you, upon this subject.' Eventually the acknowledgment took the form of 500 guineas in cash and a gold medal of the value of 200 guineas ; and Mr. Phillips was heard of no more in naval history. Of his antecedents we now know nothing : he gave his address at Lloyd's Coffee House, and was therefore presumably of respectable appearance and behaviour : that he was a good seaman and a gallant officer would seem beyond question ; and of such, in that gloomy year of 1746, the service had not one too many.

¹ Admiralty Minute, 29 April, 1746.

² 1 May, 1746. Barrow's *Life of Anson*, 139.

Considering this point of discipline and order, it is interesting to examine how it has been dealt with in the navy, to which, more than any other, it was our lot during the last century to be opposed. We find that the French have gone on a system not, indeed, diametrically opposite to our own, but still differing from it in an extreme degree. The French navy as reorganised by Colbert was, in name and reality, a purely aristocratic corps. The officers, necessarily of noble family, entered as cadets, under the name of *gardes de la marine*, and formed a most exclusive body, jealous, in an extreme degree, of their privileges and their birthright. Officers who, in the beginning, were entered from the merchant service, were styled 'blues' (*officiers bleus*),¹ a term analogous, in usage at least, to the English 'tarpaulin' of the seventeenth century. The hostility of the more aristocratic *gardes* towards the 'blues' was unrelenting: as ensigns, they might be tolerated; but as lieutenants, we are led to understand that they had a very rough time of it. In the long run, the feeling against the 'blues' proved too strong; officers from the merchant service seldom rose to the higher ranks; the navy continued the most aristocratic service under the Crown, and at the Revolution paid the penalty, in being denuded of officers.

In the regular line of navy, then, there was no room for those 'blues' who aimed at distinction; they stood aloof from it, taking service rather in private ships of war, which thus attained an importance in the scale of national defence far beyond that of the English priva-

¹ So called from their uniform breeches being blue. The more aristocratic officers of the navy wore red breeches.

teers. It seems to have been no unusual thing to confer naval rank on these men; to permit them the use of a king's ship; to sanction their engaging a ship's company under the king's authority, though at private cost, and to warrant their cruising against the enemy in the interest and advantage of those who fitted her out, as well as of the country at large. Ships so cruising were of course privateers in name and in reality, but privateers of a force and efficiency which strictly private ships of war were scarce likely to equal; and, with little or no cost to the government, they formed a powerful supplement to its established navy. Large ships, even ships of the line, were frequently so employed; and though these were sometimes owned by private individuals, they were more commonly lent by the king; for, though wealthy and patriotic merchants or corporations might equip such, they were clearly of a strength and cost beyond the requirements or the commercial advantage of the mere freebooter.

This custom, which seems to have grown up or, at least, to have received a marked development after the battle of Malaga (13-24 August, 1704), gave rise to a curious difficulty about the exchange of prisoners, the circumstances of which are best detailed in the official representation of the Commissioners for Sick and Wounded to Lord Dartmouth, one of the Secretaries of State, 1 March, 1710-11.¹ It runs thus:—

The French king, within these four years having had no fleet at sea, has made a sort of piratical war, and for that purpose has not only given great encouragement to privateers,

¹ Home Office Records (Admiralty), No. 28.

but also lent his capital ships, with guns and ammunition, to such as would be at the charge of fitting them out and arming them as they call it 'on course,' and these men of war are then called 'corsairs.' Sometimes they are commanded by the French king's officers of a lower rank, as a lieutenant of a capital ship, a lieutenant of a frigate or an ensign of a ship; and sometimes they are commanded by one who never had any commission of the French king, but only an order from the Secretary of State for marine affairs and a commission from the Grand Admiral of France, and this is the case of M. de Varennes, who (as we are credibly informed) is no more than a *garde-marine*, and had only for that voyage and that course a commission from the Count de Toulouse to command the *Happy*, a man-of-war of 60 guns. As the French would never recede from their demands about the exchange of our commanders of 6th rates, sloops and brigantines, and as (notwithstanding these reasons given by us, that they had neither commissions as captains, nor any rank in the fleet) the French did still insist that the said commanders (being actually in the queen's service and pay¹ could not be exchanged but as captains of men of war, that is, for 20 men, we have complied with it; but at the same time, whenever any of the French king's ships of force have been taken, we thought we could do no less than to propose an exchange of the commanders of the said ships for our captains of men-of-war, or for 20 men. To that end we gave leave last year to M. de Varennes and lately to M. Lamonerie, commander of the *Superbe*, a ship of 56 guns,¹ to go into France, taking their parole to return into England after three months, in case they could not procure their exchange for a captain of a British man-of-war, or 20 men; and by these means we thought to have established that as a rule in the exchange. But it seems the French court is unwilling to yield that point; and for that purpose M. Pontchartrain has sent back M. de

¹ Captured by the squadron under Admiral Aylmer in the Soundings, 30 July, 1710.

Varennnes, according to the term of his parole, and (as we are informed) he will send back M. Lamoinerie.

Your lordship sees now where the point lies. The French pretend that a private commission of the Grand Admiral does not give any post or any rank in their navy, and they will not allow of any to be sea-officers but those who are commissioned by the French king himself. To this we answer that the queen gives no commission, and that the commanders of our men of war have no other commission but from the Lord High Admiral of Great Britain, or the Lords appointed to execute that office; and we cannot but think the commission of the Grand Admiral of France to be equivalent to that of the Lord High Admiral here.

In the next place we have a very great disadvantage in that part of the exchange. All our officers having their commissions by them when they are taken, there cannot be the least dispute about their rank, and the number of men to be allowed for each; but it is quite otherwise with the French. Within these two years we have taken three or four large French men-of-war, and when we receive the list of the prisoners, we find a vast number of officers, as first, second and third captain, three or four lieutenants and as many ensigns; but when we come to examine into their qualities, most of them allege they are not the French king's officers but only corsairs, having only the Grand Admiral of France's commission; and in the very case of M. de Varennnes, as also M. Lamoinerie of the *Superbe*, they pretend there is not one officer. Thus we look upon as chicanery, for at this rate, if we could take the whole French fleet, perhaps they would not allow one single commander to be the king's officer. This we signified to [the French agent for exchange], as also that we had nothing to do with their new distinctions between corsairs and French men-of-war, when in reality they were the same ships. . . . The argument of M. de Varennnes that he has no rank nor post in France, and should be commanded at sea by the least officer of the king's, is of no weight with

us, since we are not to be governed by their rules and by their subordination of their marine officers; besides that our commanders of 6th rates, sloops and brigantines, have no more rank in the British fleet than M. de Va.ennes has in France, and as for what the French commissaries have alleged, that this is a new pretence set up by us, nothing of it having been mentioned in our original agreement, we own it is a new proposal; but they must also confess that their turning their French men-of-war into corsairs is likewise a new thing.

The French, however, seem to have carried the point, which told much in their favour, not only with respect to the corsairs, but also on account of the practice, which continued through the century, of appointing lieutenants to the command of frigates or even ships of the line. M. Chadeau de la Clocheterie, who commanded the Belle-Poule in her song-renowned combat with the Arethusa, was a lieutenant, and was immediately after the action promoted to be captain. Had the Belle-Poule been captured, M. de la Clocheterie's value in the table of exchange was 10 men; if, on the other hand, the Arethusa had succumbed, Captain Marshall's value was 15 men, although the Arethusa was by much the smaller ship of the two. As to corsairs the old rule held; their captains were exchangeable for 4 men.¹ And yet, even at this time, some of the corsairs were very large.

In the summer of 1780, the Comte d'Artois, a 64-gun ship lent by the king, and commanded by a lieutenant of the navy, was for some time a very serious trouble on the south coast of Ireland. No ordinary cruisers could tackle such a foe. At last Captain Macbride, in the Bienfaisant, of 64 guns, was sent to look after her, and, in company with the 44-gun ship Charon, fell in with

¹ *Code des Prises* (1784), p. 832.

her on 13 August, off the Old Head of Kinsale. The Comte d'Artois was crowded with men—her ship's company numbered upwards of 600; that of the Bienfaisant certainly not more than 500, probably not more than 450. The Charon was at some little distance, and the Comte d'Artois attempted to close with her principal antagonist, and carry her by boarding. 'It was a daring though unsuccessful attempt,' wrote Captain Macbride; 'after an hour and ten minutes' smart action, her rigging and sails cut to pieces, twenty-one men killed and thirty-five wounded, she struck. The Bienfaisant had three killed, twenty-two wounded, one man slightly wounded in the Charon.' The Bienfaisant had been three years in commission and several times in action; she had thus, even without the support of the Charon, a distinct advantage over the comparatively untrained privateer: had the Comte d'Artois been able to lay her on board, and bring on a land-to-hand fight, with her superiority of brute force the result might have been very different.

But this is only one instance of the great force of some of these private ships of war. Another may be cited in the 50-gun ship Apollon, which on almost exactly the same spot captured the Anglesea, of 40 guns, on 29 March, 1745 (O. S.), an event to which the decision of the consequent court-martial gave a tragic interest. The Anglesea was caught quite unprepared, her captain having persuaded himself that the ship coming down on him before the wind was his consort, the Augusta. He was killed by the second broadside; so also was the master; the first lieutenant was on shore, sick; the second lieutenant, Baker Phillips, on whom the command

devolved, was a young man of scanty experience; he consulted hastily with Mr. Taaffe, the third lieutenant, and the boatswain. There seemed nothing to be done; the ship was in no posture for fight, and lay at the mercy of a more powerful enemy. He ordered the colours to be struck; and it is difficult, even now, to see what else he could have done: but the court-martial assembled to inquire into the affair, whether influenced by the political crisis then pending, by a suspicion that Mr. Phillips was an adherent of the House of Stuart, and had traitorously betrayed his trust, or on some other grounds more difficult to conceive, pronounced that he had not done his duty, that he had not done his utmost to put the ship in order of fighting, or to encourage the inferior officers and men; and therefore sentenced him to death—to be shot by a platoon of musketeers: but, having regard to the distress and confusion the ship was in at the captain's death, when he came to the command, and to his being a young man and inexperienced, they recommended him for mercy. This recommendation the Lords Justices refused to act on, and the sentence was duly carried out. There is a romantic tradition—but, as far as I have been able to trace the course of events, quite unsupported by facts—that the wife of Mr. Phillips, on the refusal of the Lords Justices, obtained a pardon or reprieve for her husband from Queen Caroline; that she herself posted to Portsmouth, the bearer of this message of mercy, but arrived only to find that, at his own request, in order to avoid the pain of a parting interview with his wife, the hour of his execution had been anticipated, and he was already dead.

Another instance, which I may not omit, is that of

the Elizabeth, a 64-gun ship, belonging to the king, but privately fitted out, in 1745, to convoy the young Pretender to Scotland. Whilst on this service she was met, on 9-20 July, broad off Ushant, by the Lion of 60 guns, commanded by Captain (afterwards Sir Peircy) Brett. The two ships pounded each other to a standstill, and made the best of their way to their respective ports. 'As I was not so happy as to take him,' wrote Captain Brett, 'I have only the satisfaction left that I spoiled his voyage.' He mentions also one little incident of an especial interest, and which has, I think, been generally misrepresented. In company with the Elizabeth was a small ship of sixteen guns, on board which Prince Charles and his personal staff were tempting their fortune. I believe it is commonly said that this small ship—no match, of course, for the Lion—made off at once during the engagement. This was not the case. What Captain Brett, quite ignorant of the peculiar circumstances, wrote, is—'The small ship, in the beginning of the engagement, made two attempts to rake me; but I soon beat him off with my stern chase. He did us little or no harm; and after that lay off at a great distance.' That she afterwards pursued her way, whilst the Elizabeth put back—her voyage being spoiled—is, of course, matter of familiar history.

More remarkable than any of these are the Mediterranean campaigns of M. de Lage, during the years 1745-6; campaigns which in England have been little known, because, in truth, there is little to know; the noteworthy facts about them being the peculiar circumstances of their organisation and equipment. M. de Lage was not a nice man. I know of nothing about him

worthy of admiration or approval, except, perhaps, his excessive impudence. Some forty years before, he had gone, in the train of the Bourbons, into Spain; and voyaging from there to the Pacific, and, in some way or other, trading between China and Peru, had got together a very considerable fortune. On his return to Spain, by mingled self-assertion and bribery, he obtained a commission as captain in the Spanish navy, and was appointed to the *San Isidro*, of seventy guns, in which ship, and in the fleet under Navarro, he served during 1740, 1741, and 1742.

In the course of this latter year he was separated from the fleet in a gale of wind, and took refuge in Ajaccio; where on 2 March, 1743, his ship was burnt by Commodore Martin, whose respect for the neutral port was satisfied with sending a message to the governor that he was going to attack the enemy's ship, but would give him time to order his people out of the way, unless the Spanish ship fired first.

De Lage, after this, seems to have been borne as a supernumerary on board the Spanish flagship; he was in her in the indecisive action fought off Cape Sicie on 11-22 February 1744; and took charge of the ship when her captain was killed and the admiral wounded. Afterwards, with his bombastic humour, he did very real service to the English. He claimed for himself the honours of the day. According to him, the Real would have been taken had he not fortunately been on board. The captain was killed; the admiral was an arrant coward, who went down to the cockpit, and sat there on a coil of rope, with his face buried in his hands. It was he, De Lage, that defended the ship against the Marl-

borough; it was he that pointed the guns which sank the fire-ship; it was he that did everything. The French, already sick of the Spaniards, gladly accepted De Lage's story, and scouted their allies as not able even to defend their own ships. A deadly feud between the two services was the consequence; and any concerted action of Spaniards and French became an impossibility.

After this, Spain was no safe dwelling-place for De Lage. He returned to France, and, with unblushing effrontery, succeeded in persuading the Duke de Penthièvre, then Admiral of France, that he, De Lage, was the hero of the age, the one man who might re-establish the old glories of the French navy. The duke accordingly gave him a provisional commission as commodore, and authority to equip, at his own expense, a squadron of two ships of the line and two frigates. The ships' companies were to be stronger than those in the king's service; were to be subject to the same discipline, and their pay was to be one-third more than usual, in addition to their share of prize-money and a provision for their widows. Soldiers of the marines were to be allowed him in the same way; with the additional condition that an indemnity of forty francs was to be paid to the captains of companies for each one who deserted or was killed; and the number of these available not being sufficient, he was authorised to raise a company of 150 men.

Notwithstanding the high pay offered, the sailors had the greatest repugnance to embark in this expedition; they had an idea it was bound to the West Indies, where, a few years before, the squadron under the Duke d'Antin had lost nearly half its men by sickness; and they had a special dislike and mistrust of De Lage himself, whose

manners and language and actions spread terror amongst the seafaring population all along the coast. The appointed levy was not sufficient to man him; and the want was increased by continual desertions. He therefore, on his own authority, instituted a press, and laid violent hands on all the fishing and coasting boats. On this, all the sailors of the neighbourhood took to the mountains; the terror spread, and the inhabitants of the villages followed; the petty officers, who had always been counted on, also went off, and the workmen in the dock-yard, afraid of being sent on board the ships, were no longer to be found. Proclamations and punishments were of no good, and not till after De Lage had sailed did things resume their wonted course. This was in the middle of April, 1745.

Fifteen days after his departure, De Lage returned, his ships having been damaged in a gale. His temper, and insolence, and the airs which he—a mere privateer, as they considered him—put on, had rendered him hateful to all the officers of the port; and it was with the greatest difficulty that the commander-in-chief could obtain for him the necessary assistance. Again, and once again, he put to sea, and each time returned after a short and unavailing cruise. In a fourth attempt he succeeded in capturing two small prizes of no great value, and in safely bringing in a convoy to Marseilles. But at each return his men deserted by scores; after this last, they went off in crowds, even by swimming, in spite of De Lage's threats, sword and pistol in hand. They complained of ill-usage and of bad provisions. During the last cruise sixty men had died, and on coming into port 200 had been sent sick on shore. Finding himself thus

weakened, De Lage resolved to lay up the largest of his ships, one of seventy-four guns; but it was not till January 1746 that the others were ready for sea, and they were still sadly short of men. Even the sailors they had were ready to desert if they got the chance: they feared the voyage, suspected they were not likely to get any prize money, and doubted even of their wages. Finally the squadron put to sea on 2 April; it consisted of the 54-gun ship *Oriflamme*, and the two 30-gun frigates *Diane* and *Volage*.

On 4 April, being then in the neighbourhood of Cape St. Martin, on the coast of Spain, the *Volage*, which had chased out of sight of her consorts, fell in with the *Stirling Castle* of 70 guns. She took to flight, the *Stirling Castle* pursuing. A stern chase is proverbially a long one: the *Stirling Castle* could only fire her bow guns, and those occasionally and with but little effect; with her stern guns the *Volage* manfully held her own; it was not till after her main-topmast was shot away, and she lay exposed to the *Stirling Castle*'s broadside, at short range, that she hauled down her colours. During the night she rolled away her fore-topmast and her mizenmast; and the next morning, whilst her captors were trying to get her a little in order, the *Oriflamme* and *Diane* came in sight. The *Stirling Castle* had herself received a good deal of damage from the *Volage*'s stern guns, and her captain hastily judged that she was not equal to the two ships of the enemy. He abandoned his prize, leaving in her a lieutenant and twenty-five men, and some of the prisoners. The *Volage* was thus retaken; but De Lage made no attempt to pursue the *Stirling Castle*, feeling probably, on his part, sufficiently well

satisfied to be left alone. For not destroying the *Volage*, the captain was afterwards reprimanded by a court-martial; but at that time our naval prestige was not brilliant; and for a 70-gun ship to decline an engagement with a ship of 54 guns, supported by a frigate, was considered prudent and not blamable.

This affair, however, put an end to De Lage's cruise; he returned to Toulon, where he arrived on 1 May. The three ships were put out of commission; but the men's pay was not forthcoming. The thing had been a speculation, and had not succeeded: no prizes had been taken, and neither M. de Lage nor the merchants who had fitted him out had the necessary funds. The accounts were thus not settled for a long time; and the greater part of the charge would seem to have been eventually defrayed by the government.¹

Notwithstanding the scale of his adventure, or, perhaps I should rather say, in consequence of the very peculiar circumstances of his equipment and his dismangling, as well as the very slight success that attended his cruising, the name of De Lage has no great place in the naval history of France. A different fate has been that of some of De Lage's predecessors; men who, starting from a much lower point than De Lage, and with much less pretension, did accomplish a good deal, and achieve a renown which, overspread with much fable, has towered over all the more orthodox glories of the French navy. Of these, the most remarkable in point of popular fame is Jean Bart.

It is difficult to explain—indeed, I do not clearly

¹ V. Brun, *Guerres Maritimes de la France: Port de Toulon, ses armements etc.*, tom. 1. pp. 311–319.

know—why popular fancy should have taken hold of Jean Bart for the sort of apotheosis with which he has been honoured. In general estimation he is the ideal and quintessence of heroic achievement and naval glory; a sort of French counterpart of Drake, Hawke, Rodney, and Nelson, all rolled into one, with an additional seasoning of Faulknor, Sidney Smith, and ‘brave’ Broke. Bartiana are innumerable; and he has been the subject of as much fable and as wild romance as Arthur or Charlemagne. Possibly enough some Englishmen have thus been led to look on his very existence as a myth. This, however, is a mistake. He was, in his day, a very real personage, a bold seaman and a successful cruiser; his services, as such, were acknowledged and rewarded by the king; but his very peculiar fame—which belongs principally to a later period—is, I believe, due to his being of very humble origin; it was thus a glorification of the ‘people’ that afterwards claimed the attributive ‘sovereign,’ and a protest against the imbecility and ignorance of some courtly favourites of the ruling ‘harlotocracy.’

Jean Bart,¹ a native of Dunkirk, and thus by birth a subject of France, but by blood a countryman rather of

¹ There are three lives of Jean Bart which have some pretensions to being original works. One by Richer, published in 1776, which is little more than a collection of floating legends. • One by Eugène Sue, published in 1835 under the imposing title of *Histoire de la Marine française*, which is in reality an absurd romance; the author’s part of the work scarcely pretends to be authentic, but it contains a number of original papers, letters, and reports, which are really valuable. The third is that by Vanderest, published in 1840; undoubtedly the best, though far indeed from perfect. All others (and they are very numerous) are based on these, mostly on Richer; they appear as *éloges*, chapbooks or volumes in libraries for the young, and have no historical value whatever.

the Tromps and De Ruyter, was born in 1650, of poor but perhaps not too honest parents: his father and his grandfather before him followed the sea; privateers—not without a taint of piracy—in time of war, as Frenchmen, or Dutchmen, against Spain; and in time of peace, fishermen, coasting traders, and apparently smugglers. In some such employment Jean Bart spent his early years; but in 1665 or 1666 he is said to have taken service with the Dutch, and, if tradition may be accepted, under the personal command of De Ruyter himself. In this there is nothing improbable; he was certainly more Dutch than French; and there is no difficulty in the way of our believing that he was present in one or both of the actions of 1666, and at the burning of the English ships in the Medway in 1667. He continued in the Dutch service for six years; he is said to have risen in it to the rank of lieutenant, which is possible, and—as he was a bold man and a thorough seaman—not improbable. I accept, then, the statements that he learned his early seamanship, that he acquired his intimate knowledge of the coasts and tides of the North Sea as a fisherman and a smuggler; and that he gained his first experience of naval war and naval discipline under De Ruyter.

When war between France and Holland broke out in 1672, his double nationality pulled each way; but he elected to be a Frenchman. As by blood and by six years' service he was a Dutchman, it is not, perhaps, too uncharitable to suppose that the commerce of the Dutch, incomparably richer than that of the French, was the lure that decided his choice; that it seemed to offer more direct profit and advantage; whilst, on the other hand, he would have, as a Frenchman, fewer rivals. That

this is the correct view of his conduct would appear more probable from the fact that, on returning to France, he did not seek for service under the crown, although the young navy was then mustering its strength to send forth the squadron which, under D'Estrées, was effectively, or in appearance, united with the English during the campaigns of 1672 and 1673. On the contrary, he entered on board a Dunkirk privateer, where he saw a better opening for his talents, and served in a subordinate capacity for two years; it was not till 1674 that he was entrusted with a small command. Here he quickly came to the front, and till the end of the war continued actively cruising against his former associates, in company with others, like himself, of doubtful nationality—men with such names as Keyser, Jacobsen, Doorn, or one, if not three, that appears in French travestied as Hennarker, Mesmaker, or Neumarker.

That his cruising was fairly successful may be assumed. Some of his prizes are spoken of as frigates—whether state's ships or privateers is uncertain; and though he seems thoroughly to have understood the important tactical axiom that 'two are greater than one,' and with the help of Keyser, Jacobsen, or others, to have taken care to be in the majority at the point of attack, we may easily believe that he had numerous opportunities of proving his courage and determination, as well as his forethought and tactical skill. Especial mention is made of his capturing the *Neptune*, of 30 guns, and the *Palme*, of 24, a feat which, added to others before it, brought his name to the notice of the minister. On 18 September, 1676, Colbert wrote to the superintendent of Dunkirk:—

His Majesty has been pleased to learn that a Dunkirk privateer, commanded by Captain Jean Bart, has taken a Dutch man-of-war of thirty-two guns. As it is important to stimulate these captains to continue the war which they wage against the Dutch, herein is enclosed a gold chain, which his Majesty has thought fit to award to Captain Bart, as a recompense for what he has done.

The letter then continues :

As his Majesty might derive considerable advantages from these privateer captains of Dunkirk, if they would form themselves into a squadron under the command of one of their number, in order to carry on the war against the enemy, his Majesty desires you to forward a nominal list of the captains, with a report as to their several characters and capabilities, a statement of what they have done during the war, and of the size and efficiency of their ships : and also to ascertain whether, in return for such aid as his Majesty might be able to give them, as, for instance, by furnishing them with ships for the cruise, free of payment, or by offering other advantages, they could be induced to carry out the plan above mentioned.

To this, on 24 September, the superintendent replied that, if such a scheme should be carried out, he believed most of the privateers would willingly serve under Bart, who, though still young, had won a high reputation amongst them by his bravery and success. 'But,' he added, 'on whatever service they are ordered, their actions will depend on their own interest, and I think that they will be ready to receive and requite the assistance his Majesty proposes. At any rate, it will induce them, when cruising, to consider ships of war as a special object of attack.' And a few days later, 28 September, after more exact inquiries, he wrote :—

The thing still seems to me feasible, if the proper measures are taken with the merchants and the seamen, who are always mistrustful of engagements for the service of his Majesty. If you are prepared to lend the king's ships without payment, I would recommend that one should be put at the disposal of Captain Bart and his owners, who have lost by his last voyage, and who now ask, as a recompense for the capture of the Dutch man-of-war, the remittal of the claim of the admiralty, instead of the regulation grant of five hundred livres per gun. If this should be allowed, it will put into the heads of other owners to desire the same, and thus to give in to your ideas of utilising them. All the rest will be easy.

To this is appended an exact list of thirty-three privateer captains belonging to Dunkirk, with fifteen frigates and twelve smaller craft.

Colbert's design, however, fell through, whether from jealousy amongst the shipowners and the several captains, or because the government was not prepared to pay what these would have considered an equivalent for giving up the more lucrative branch of privateering to follow the more warlike; and thus Jean Bart continued, in company for the most part with his friend Keyser, to cruise against the Dutch for the private advantage of himself and his owners.

After the peace of 1678, he received a commission as lieutenant in the navy, which he is said to have accepted unwillingly, preferring to be the captain of his own ship, if only a privateer, rather than a lieutenant, even of a king's ship. It was urged on him that he would probably be a captain at the end of a year. 'I'm a captain already,' he answered. 'Of a king's ship?' was suggested. 'Of a Dunkirk privateer,' was his reply. In point of fact, Bart probably knew very well the discom-

forts to which he would have been subjected, had he consented to leave the social rank to which he was born and bred, to enter one whose restraints his rough temper would have felt to be unbearable. He thus never served in the subordinate capacity, but in 1681 was appointed by a certain M. Omaer, a shipowner of Dunkirk, to the command of a small squadron which he fitted out against the Salee pirates. The expedition was, however, so far sanctioned by the government that it hired out the frigate *Vipère* to M. Omaer, and allowed Bart his pay as a lieutenant. Bart applied for pay as a commander (*capitaine de frégate*), but this was refused. On 3 June he put to sea in the *Vipère*, with two smaller ships, and off the mouth of the Tagus fell in with the frigate *Mutine*, commanded by M. de Béthune, a captain in the navy (*capitaine de vaisseau*), who took Bart's little squadron under his orders, and a few days later drove two of the Salee rovers ashore on the coast of Portugal. The pirates were seized on shore by the Portuguese, who made slaves of them, and at first refused to give them up, a refusal which drew forth a letter, 6 August, from Colbert to the French ambassador at Lisbon :—

The King understands that the Chevalier de Béthune and the commander of the Dunkirk frigates, having met two Salee vessels, engaged them, and drove them ashore, one near Cape Mondego, the other at some other place on the coast; and as the Turks who were on board these vessels clearly belong to those who defeated and reduced them to this extremity, his Majesty orders me to acquaint you that it is his desire that you represent this to the Prince of Portugal, and earnestly move him to be pleased to give the necessary orders to have the said Turks given up to the Chevalier de Béthune and the Dunkirk commander.

From all which it appears that Lieutenant Bart's share in the transaction, such as it was, was merely of secondary importance, and very different from what his eulogists—ignoring M. de Bethune and the Mutine frigate—have represented it to be.¹ Amidst the tissue of fiction woven round Bart's history, it is refreshing to come across a passage of which the late M. Jal has given us an authentic account.

Bart's cruise was of no long duration; on 15 October he arrived back at Dunkirk, peace having been made with the Moors; and during the next seven years would seem to have been engaged in the peaceful pursuits of commerce, though he is said to have been employed during the autumn of 1683 in giving effect to the aggressive policy of Louis XIV, and, whilst cruising in the *Serpente* frigate, to have seized on a Spanish ship laden with 350 soldiers for Flanders. This is doubtful; but it is at any rate certain that for a few months in the following spring he did command the *Serpente*, then one of a small squadron which, under M. d'Amblimont, cruised for the protection of the coasting trade against the Ostend privateers.² His commission as commander (*capitaine de frégate*) was dated 14 August, 1686; but he had no further service under the government until the breaking out of the war with Holland and England, when he was appointed to the frigate *Railleuse*, of 24 guns.

In the early days of this command he is said to have been guilty of an act of the most unmitigated brutality,

¹ Jal's *Abraham Du Quesne et la Marine de son temps*, ii. 390.

² *Ibid.* ii. 479. M. Jal clearly does not attach any credit to the story of the Spanish transport: I am inclined to think it true in fact, but that M. Vanderest has wrongly dated it.

which even modern French writers have professed to admire, as worthy, they say, of the heroic virtue of a Brutus or a Manlius. In an engagement with a Dutch privateer, his son Cornil, a child of ten years old, showed symptoms of fear. Enraged at such behaviour in a child of his, Bart, with his own hands, bound the boy to the mainmast, and kept him there so long as the fight lasted, preferring to expose his son thus to the greatest danger, rather than permit him to survive as a coward. We may not quite see the greater bodily danger to which the boy was exposed, though there can be little doubt of the mental; but, in point of fact, there is no reason to suppose that the story has a word of truth in it. There is absolutely no evidence in support of it, beyond some hearsay gossip that Richer picked up and printed nearly a hundred years afterwards. It was then, as it has been ever since, the aim to describe Bart as a brutal ruffian, a character which had unspeakable charms for the Jacobin spirit then latent, but shortly to attain such a terrible development.

The events of the following summer are more historical. In the early spring Bart was directed to take under his command the Chevalier Forbin in the *Serpente*, and to go to Havre, thence to convoy a number of ships to Brest. Forbin was an officer of the aristocratic navy, a brave man and a good seaman, but boastful to an extreme degree, full of contempt for all 'blues,' mixed with hatred of the particular one under whose orders he was now put, or—as he would have preferred to say—with whom he was associated. His memoirs, written professedly by himself, and certainly under his direct sanction, are most amusing, but very far from

trustworthy.¹ The reputed author assumes to himself throughout the principal part in every adventure of which he had a share, and loses no opportunity of saying spiteful things of his companions, especially of Jean Bart, whom he describes as tall, stout, well-made, but of mean presence, rude in manner and in speech, unable to read, or write beyond signing his name; brave, indeed, but without talent, and quite unequal to any comprehensive design. The memoirs of Forbin would, by themselves, be of little historical value, but they become useful when compared with other records, and on their negative evidence full dependence may be placed. When they omit a story that tells in favour of Forbin, or to the discredit of Jean Bart, the omission amounts almost to proof of that story's falsehood.

It was in May, 1689, whilst convoying some twenty merchant vessels to Brest, that these two were met off the Casquets by the *Nonsuch*, of 48 guns, commanded by Captain Roomecoyle. They vainly attempted to persuade the convoy to stand by them and make a good fight. The merchant ships fled, and the *Railleuse* and *Serpente* were taken after a stout resistance, in which the captain and master of the *Nonsuch* were killed, the command devolving upon the boatswain, Robert Sincock, who took the prizes into Plymouth, and was shortly afterwards promoted to the rank of captain. Bart and Forbin were meantime put in prison; but, as their good luck had it, a kinsman of Bart's, commanding an Ostend vessel—probably a small privateer—put into Plymouth, and being

¹ *Mémoires du Comte de Forbin*, Chef d'Escadre, Chevalier de l'Ordre Militaire de St. Louis. 2 vols. 12mo. Amst. 1729. They are reprinted in the Petitot collection.

informed of Bart's condition, went to see him. He was easily persuaded to assist in a project to escape, the more readily as Forbin had been able to get a bill cashed, and had plenty of ready money. A Flemish surgeon who had been allowed to visit them, and two boys told off to attend on them, were also made parties to the plot. The Ostender had a boat ready for them, with provisions and a compass. The surgeon got them a file; they filed away the bars of the window, twisted their sheets into a rope, and went down. There was no further obstacle, and they embarked without delay. In going out through the Sound they were hailed by a man-of-war, near which they were obliged to pass. Bart could speak sufficient English, and answered 'Fishing-boat!' and so they got clear out to sea. The weather was fine, though foggy, and without further adventure they made the coast of Bretagne, near St. Malo, after a passage of nearly forty-eight hours, Bart having rowed the whole time without resting except to snatch a mouthful of food.

Their bold defence and their hazardous escape commended them to M. de Seignelay, the minister of the navy, and they were both promoted to be captains (*capitaines de vaisseau*); nor was it long before further employment was found for them. In December, Bart was appointed to the *Alcyon*, a frigate of 30 guns, which during the next year was attached to the grand fleet under Tourville, and was present at the battle off Beachy Head. This seems to have been his only service with the fleet. During the rest of the war he was employed strictly as a cruiser in the North Sea, slipping in and out of Dunkirk with a skill and craftiness that set the watchful care of his enemies at defiance. These evasions were so

numerous that it is difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish them; but in no one instance were they made by force. I note this specially, as giving the direct lie to one of the silliest and most absurd of the stock stories of his biographers. It is said that, on going to court, the king asked him how he had got out of Dunkirk. On this, he ranged some dozen of the gentlemen standing round in a crowd before him; then suddenly rushing into the thick of them, knocking down some, tripping up others, or violently elbowing them on one side, he passed through, and turning round, said, 'That's the way I did it.' And we are gravely called on to believe that the king laughed approvingly at this outrage, and that the gentlemen of his court tamely endured it. Our conception of a French gentleman at the end of the seventeenth century is widely far of the mark if such conduct would not have ensured M. Bart's being spitted on one of a dozen small swords before the day was an hour older.

Although it is not exactly stated, it is implied by Richer, whom all follow, that this incident took place after his cruise of 1691. Now, in this cruise he was accompanied by Forbin, who has given us an account of it that, in many details, is worthy of belief. If by any stretch of conscience Forbin could have boasted that they passed out by force, or even with any risk of it, he would certainly have done so. What he says is— •

We put to sea in the night-time, passed without any obstacle through intervals between the enemy, and sailing very well, were by daybreak out of sight of them. Towards the next evening we saw four sail steering the same course. Bart was at first of opinion that these were enemy's ships, detached from the blockading squadron in pursuit of us; but I pointed out to

him that, as we had been out of sight of the enemy in the morning, as our ships were clean and all fast sailers, and as we had been carrying a press of sail all day, it was quite impossible for any of the blockaders to have thus gained on us.

They were, in fact, he says, three English merchant ships, under convoy of a 44-gun ship, all of which they took and sent into Bergen. They then came across the Dutch herring-fleet, with a man-of-war, which they took and burnt; afterwards landed on the coast of Scotland and burnt some houses, but were driven off by the yeomanry, and so went on to join their prizes at Bergen. In all this, allowing for Forbin's exaggeration and braggadocio, there is nothing in the least unlikely; but none of our naval histories mention the circumstances of the cruise further than Burchett, who has shortly—

About this time—the end of July—fifteen or sixteen privateers got out of Dunkirk, and ranging along the northern coast, under command of Monsieur Du Bart, landed in Northumberland, where they burnt a house of the Lord Widdrington's and did some other mischiefs.

Burchett is generally correct, so far as he goes; but it appears from Hodgson's 'History of Northumberland' that it was in 1693 that the French burnt some cottages belonging to Lord Widdrington, though it is possible enough that they paid two visits to that remote and exposed neighbourhood.-

Bergen is the scene, and this autumn of 1691 is therefore the time of another absurdity of Bart's biographers. He made there, says Richer, the acquaintance of an Englishman commanding a large ship, who expressed the great desire he had to meet him at sea. This Bart assured him would be quite easy, if he chose to wait a few

days, which the Englishman agreed to do. When he was ready, he therefore sent the Englishman word that he would sail the next day, who answered, with all his heart, but meantime invited Jean Bart to breakfast. At first, unwilling to interchange any such civilities with an enemy, Jean Bart refused; afterwards, however, he consented, and went on board. He breakfasted, drank his glass of brandy, smoked his pipe, and said, 'It's time to go.' Said the Englishman, 'No: you're my prisoner. I have pledged my word to carry you to England.' Jean Bart, with a look of rage and indignation, lighted his match, and rushed out of the cabin, upsetting some of the crew who were in his way, and calling out, 'No! I am not your prisoner! I will blow up the ship.' So saying, and holding the lighted match, he ran to a barrel of powder which they had, by chance, hoisted up out of the magazine. This barrel, we may suppose also by chance, must have been open. The English crew, in this imminent danger, were panic-struck, and the Frenchmen from the neighbouring ships, having heard Jean Bart's cry, at once took boat, came on board in numbers, cut down many of the English, made the rest prisoners, and took possession of the ship, which they carried out of the neutral port and brought safely to Dunkirk.

It is unnecessary to dwell on the numerous absurdities of such a story: it is sufficient to say that Forbin, who dwells in some detail on their stay in Bergen, does not speak of it. We may be quite sure that if they had captured an English ship of war there, or an English ship of any kind, Forbin would have described himself as the captor; that if there had been anywhere an open barrel of powder, Forbin's would have been the hand

that held the match. On their return from this expedition, the two presented themselves at Court. 'Here comes Forbin with his bear,' said the courtiers, according to Forbin. If the bear had been guilty of any distinct barbarism, Forbin would certainly have told us of it; and this negative evidence is, I have already said, positive proof that Bart did not engage the gentlemen-in-waiting in fisticuffs, nor insist on smoking in the anteroom.

It would be tedious, as well as difficult, to follow out in detail M. Bart's numerous cruises, in all of which, either by ruse or good fortune, he eluded our blockading squadrons. But his principal achievements were against the Dutch. In the summer of 1694, in command of a squadron of six ships, ranging from one of 54 guns downwards, he encountered a similar Dutch force, which had made prize of a large grain-fleet destined for France. This squadron he engaged, captured two of the ships of war, recaptured the convoy, and in a season of great scarcity, brought the grain safely in. It was in acknowledgment of this service that he received letters of nobility, and was made Chevalier of the Order of St. Louis.

In 1695, when the English fleet under Lord Berkeley made an unavailing attack on Dunkirk, Bart commanded one of the forts, and took a prominent part in the defence; but perhaps his most brilliant exploit was in the summer of 1696. In May of that year it became known in England that Monsieur du Bart—as he was always called on this side of the water—was preparing to sail from Dunkirk with a squadron of nine ships. It was of course an object to prevent him; the port was closely blockaded by a large force, English and Dutch, of which Rear-Admiral Benbow had the command. Benbow, in his boat, went

almost into the harbour ; found that the enemy was ready for sea, and, from the wind and tide, was led to suppose that they would attempt to go out by the north passage. He took his measures accordingly. The next day was hazy ; when the fog lifted on the following morning, Bart and his ships were not to be seen. They had slipped out through the east passage. To look for them was a vain task. On 30 May the English admiral learnt that Bart had been seen to the northward ; he wished to follow ; but the Dutch contingent, having been put under his orders for the blockade of Dunkirk, refused to go with him elsewhere. Bart meantime was on the Dogger Bank, in the neighbourhood of which, on 18 June, he fell in with a fleet of seventy Dutch merchant ships, under convoy of five ships of war, of inferior force. These last he captured and burnt, dispersed the convoy, and took some thirty of them. He was interrupted by the approach of a large fleet of what seemed to be men-of-war. If they really were so, they must have been Dutch ; for Benbow spent the summer vainly looking for him. Bart, like a will-o'-the-wisp, seemed to be everywhere, except where he was heard of. It was not till the middle of September that Benbow succeeded in getting a distant view of the object of his search, and then the pursuit was to little purpose ; his only satisfaction was that by falling in the day before with a number of English and Dutch East Indiamen, he had kept them out of the Frenchman's clutches. After this Bart returned into Dunkirk, and laid up for the winter ; but his services were considered deserving of special recognition. He was promoted to the rank of commodore (*chef d'escadre*) in a letter from the king, which, in no commonplace manner, praises his bravery

and conduct, 'as having been useful to the state during the scarcity of provisions,' and adds, 'that after having entrusted him at different times with the command of our squadrons in the North Sea, in which he has acquitted himself to the advantage and glory of our arms, it is just to join to the duties of commodore, the rank also, and the privileges.' This is dated 1 April, 1697, and may be considered as closing his peculiar career. His only service in the new rank was the conveying the Prince de Conti, a candidate for the throne of Poland, to Dantzic, in the following September.

M. Jal, at once the most learned and the most accurate of French naval historians, assures us that Bart carefully selected his squadron, taking with him none but light fast-sailing ships, because he knew that the important mission was entrusted to his reason and prudence rather than to his courage; and that thus he passed without misadventure through those seas where the English and Dutch were cruising.¹ The voyage is, in fact, now and to us, principally remarkable as affording a text for what is perhaps the most absurd of the many absurd stories which are supposed to illustrate Bart's character. During the passage, it is said, his little squadron was chased by the enemy's fleet. Bart, as soon as they were reported, called his son, the same whom eight years before he had bound to the mainmast, and who, thanks to that rude lesson, was now fit for any service, however desperate—and gave him whispered instructions. The chase continued for eight hours—from 7 A.M. to 3 P.M. is specified—at the end of which time the enemy was no longer in sight. Bart then went down to the cabin, where the prince,

¹ *Dictionnaire Critique*, s.v. Conti.

knowing nothing of the day's excitement—though it had lasted over breakfast and dinner time—was quietly sitting.

‘You’ve had a narrow escape, Monseigneur,’ said he.

‘What do you mean?’ asked the prince.

‘Why,’ answered Bart, ‘that we’ve been chased by three 80-gun ships and nine frigates; we’ve run them out of sight, and there’s nothing more to fear.’

‘The devil! Monsieur Bart: but if they had taken us?’

‘Oh, Monseigneur, that was quite impossible.’

‘Eh! what? why impossible?’

‘Because,’ answered Bart, ‘I had stationed my brave Cornil in the gun-room with a lighted match, and strict orders to put it into the powder if we should be overpowered.’

‘Good heavens!’ cried the prince, ‘you would never have done such a thing!’

‘Certainly I would have done it,’ said Bart. ‘It shall never be said that I let you be taken, when the king ordered me to take care that you were not taken.’

This story, utterly absurd and entirely without foundation, is supposed to illustrate the unflinching and desperate courage of the man; many other stories equally absurd, equally without foundation, have the same tendency. French writers and gossipmongers have chosen to represent him as of the most reckless courage, *d’une bouillante intrépidité*, which went headlong against all odds, with uncalculating impetuosity. The other side of his character, according to the same illustrations, was a violence of manner, a coarseness and indecency of language, which have rendered his name almost proverbial, and more especially won the affections of the *sans-culottes*

of the Revolution. For these stories there is no historical evidence; they are absurd, improbable, impossible on the very face of them; but I reject them, in the mass, not for their absurdity, improbability, or impossibility, but because there is no trace of them for more than fifty years after Commodore Bart's death, which happened, peacefully in 1702, just as the new war was breaking out. It is these absurd inventions which have stood in the way of Bart's fame; people, English people especially, have doubted the worth of the hero of such fables. But putting on one side everything which is not historical, his reputation will rise far higher; he will then appear, not as a coarse, imbruted ruffian, but as a bold seaman, a skilful pilot, and a daring warrior; of undaunted courage, but crafty and prudent, rather than blindly ferocious; illiterate, it may be, but not uneducated; rude in speech and gesture, but not bestial; in fact, neither god, nor devil, nor baboon; an enemy, but still a man.

Of Bart's personal appearance I can say nothing beyond what Forbin has told us, which should, perhaps, be read with the most favourable interpretation. There are, indeed, pictures of him in existence; whether contemporary or not, I am unable to say; but, judging of them from prints I have seen, they differ so widely from each other, that it is utterly impossible they can all be likenesses. In his private capacity he seems to have been amiable and domestic; a fond husband and an affectionate father. He was twice married, and left a numerous offspring, whose descendants still keep alive in France his deservedly honoured name.

CHAPTER IX.

*THE FRENCH PRIVATEERS.*II. DU GUAY-TROUIN.¹

IF we put on one side the peculiar and more than half-mythical history of Jean Bart, there is perhaps no officer of the French navy whose fame has taken deeper hold of the popular fancy than Du Guay-Trouin. It is certainly more widely spread than that of Tourville, Gallissonnière, or Suffren, any one of whom a critical judgment might pronounce superior to him in the qualities of high command. Tourville, although, indeed, with a considerable superiority of force, won, off Beachy Head, the one decisive French victory over a fleet of which the English formed a chief part; Gallissonnière, by cool skill and cautious bravery, turned the blundering and the negligence of his antagonist to good effect, and was the real captor of Minorca; and Suffren, in the East Indies, distinguished above all his compeers by his audacious and restless energy, showed himself in tactical genius the direct precursor of our own Nelson. But though history acknowledges these as the greatest names in the French naval chronicle, and though the names of large ironclads or

¹ *Fraser's Magazine*, April, 1882.

cruisers keep alive among seamen the memory of their distinguished services, to the intelligence of the great mass of the people their fame is, as I understand it, at a far lower pitch than that of Du Guay-Trouin. This may, to some extent, be due to the fact that Du Guay-Trouin's exploits had about them an adventurous and personal character which was wanting to those of the other officers I have named. Suffren, for instance, served principally on board ships of the line and in large fleets; he never held any independent command, never was employed on detached service, until, as a commodore, he sailed for the East Indies. Du Guay-Trouin, on the other hand, never served except as his own commander-in-chief. Whether the force with him was large or small, it was his; his personality thus pervades the whole of his career, and renders him the one prominent feature in every action in which he had part. This circumstance had undoubtedly a very great influence in the spreading, or rather—if I may use a French word which has no exact English equivalent—in the *vulgarisation* of his fame; but much is still due to the fact that the man was sprung from the ranks of the people, was amongst naval officers a 'blue,' and nothing but a 'blue.' This appealed to the secret instincts of a large body of the people; and when Hawke or Boscawen or Rodney were capturing or destroying the king's fleets, and banging¹ the aristocrats who commanded them, it was pleasing to the unwitting fathers of future republicans to remember that the time had been when an officer whom the aristocrats looked on with scorn, had reversed the fortune of

¹ This is the word used by a naval minstrel of last century. See *post*, p. 326.

the great game, and had shown that the English might possibly be beaten, even at sea.¹

For at least a couple of centuries the Trouins had held a leading place amongst the merchants and shipowners of St. Malo, and for many successive generations some member of the family had been French consul at Malaga. In the third quarter of the seventeenth century this office was held by René Trouin, the younger brother of Luc Trouin, who owned and commanded a ship named *La Vierge sans Macule*, a privateer in time of war, a trader, chiefly to the Spanish ports, in time of peace. He possessed also a small landed property, *La Barbinais*, from which according to custom, he took a distinguishing name. This Luc Trouin de la Barbinais had married a young Maloine, Marguérite Boscher, whose name, however, would seem to tell of a German or Dutch ancestry, and by her had sons and daughters. Luc, the eldest son, was destined to succeed his father in the somewhat mixed business which he carried on; the second, Rodolphe, died young; the third, René, named after his uncle and godfather, the consul at Malaga, was born on 10 June,

¹ The principal authority for the life of Du Guay-Trouin is his own *Mémoires*, published at Amsterdam in 1748, and since then in the Petiot collection. The memoir by Cunat (*Saint-Malo illustré par ses marins*, p. 170) is also a valuable, and in many respects an independent work; that by Landelle is a mere compilation. Since this sketch was originally written, another and interesting work has been published, *Duguay-Trouin et Saint-Malo, la Cité Corsaire*, d'après des documents inédits, par l'Abbé M. J. Poulain. A close comparison of the *Mémoires* with our own histories, and with our unpublished records, has led me to form a very high opinion of Du Guay-Trouin's truthfulness: a certain partiality or occasional exaggeration he may have yielded to, but assuredly not to such an extent as our own historians, who had no excuse but that of paltry and ill-timed 'spread-eagleism.' The name is foreign: the vice is not—I grieve to say—un-English.

1673. There were two still younger, Etienne and Nicolas.

In accordance with the old and still prevalent custom of France, René was entrusted to the nursing care of a peasant woman living in the village of Le Gué, nigh to the paternal estate, a simple circumstance which led to his being afterwards known as Trouin du Gué, a name which was gradually corrupted till it became Du Guay-Trouin, and so, in his later years, he himself wrote it, though officially he was René Trouin du Guay. As the consul at Malaga enjoyed the friendship of the archbishop, it was determined that his interest should be used in favour of his godson, who was accordingly, at an early age, sent to the college at Rennes, where his young head was duly tonsured, and his neck encircled with the little collar of the divinity student. René, whose infancy had been passed on the wharf and amongst the ships of St. Malo, and who had already pictured himself a sailor, objected strongly to the process, but in vain. Old Luc had a strong will, a keen eye to the family interest, and had quite made up his mind that, for his son number three, the clerical would be a profitable line of business. He died, however, in the spring of 1688, and, as his brother at Malaga had died the year before, young René's mother so far yielded to her son's objection to the church, as to allow him to exchange it for the law. The lad was therefore sent to Caen, where his studies took the form of fencing, brawling, love-making, and drinking. It was his ambition to fight a duel, and in two or three he succeeded in getting himself duly pinked, so that his time was pretty fairly divided between the preliminary dissipation and the resulting sick-bed. He

made the acquaintance of a professional gambler, 'a capital fellow,' who taught him how to control fortune, 'but,' he adds, 'of these lessons I never made any bad use.' He assisted an older comrade in the abduction of a young girl, and finally, having got possession of some twenty louis, set off to Paris for a spree. Fortunately for the lad, his elder brother, Luc, now De la Barbinais, who had succeeded his uncle in the consulship at Malaga, had been driven home by the outbreak of war between Spain and France. He was thus in Paris when Rene came there, and the boy, accidentally hearing his brother's name, took fright, and forthwith fled back to Caen. Here De la Barbinais found him a few days later, and having been informed of his irregular, not to say vicious line of life, took him home, convened a family meeting to consider his case, and straightway packed him off to sea on board the *Trinite*, a so-called frigate of eighteen guns, fitting out as a privateer by the house of Trouin. He was then just turned sixteen.

It was the summer of 1689. War had broken out with England and Holland, in addition to Spain. Privateering promised to be active, and Rene Trouin found himself engaged in a life which offered all the charms of excitement and adventure. He had fallen on his true vocation, and, during this autumn of 1689 and the next year, won golden opinions from the officers to whose care he was entrusted; so much so that in the spring of 1691 his brother, De la Barbinais, the head of the house, judged him fit to command one of their cruisers. He was thus barely eighteen, and had been at sea not more than nine or ten months in all, when he was appointed

captain of the *Danycan*¹ of 14 guns. His popular biographers attribute this speedy promotion to his surpassing merit. Without questioning this merit, we would rather attribute it simply to his relationship to the head of the firm; for to talk of his being under the circumstances a thorough seaman is downright nonsense. The *Danycan* had no sooner got to sea than she was caught by a gale of wind and blown right out of the Channel. She managed, however, without any great harm, to put into the Shannon, where, as the storm moderated, Trouin landed in Clare, pillaged, burnt a couple of vessels lying in the mud, and embarked again in face of a detachment of troops from Limerick. The remainder of his cruise was to no purpose. The *Danycan* sailed so badly that she could not overtake anything, and on her return to St. Malo her young captain was transferred to the *Coetquen*, of 18 guns. In this he put to sea on 4 June, 1692, having, it is said, a commission from the ex-king of England, James II, and in company with the *Saint-Aaron*, of similar force, commanded by a certain Jacques Welch, the son of an Irishman settled at St. Malo,² and now commissioned by King James. These two ships cruising together presently fell in with a large fleet of English merchantmen, of which they took five and the two small men-of-war that formed their escort. They were standing, with their prizes, for the Breton coast, when they were chased by an English squadron. The *Saint-Aaron* and the prizes got into St. Malo, but the *Coetquen*'s retreat was cut off, and she

¹ The name of a family of St. Malo ship-owners and corsairs. Cunat, *St. Malo, &c.*, p. 272.

² Cunat, *Saint-Malo, &c.*, p. 248.

only escaped by running into the shoal water and intricate passages inside the Isle of Brchat, and so into the anchorage of Erqui, nine leagues to the westward. Here the English ships could not follow, and in attempting to do so got into great danger. Trouin himself, when he wished to come out, was sorely put to it, for his pilot, and all the officers who might have taken his place, had been killed or wounded. If, as he has recorded, he brought the ship out without previous knowledge and without assistance, it speaks vastly more for his nerve and power of command than does the capturing of dozens of defenceless merchantmen, or of the pitiful small craft then employed to convoy them. It speaks also of a wonderful instinct or intuition, and of a great deal of good luck, for, as is shown on our modern charts, the place is as nasty a one as a sailor would wish to see his ship in. For the rest of the cruise he had the entire charge. A storm drove him into the Bristol Channel. He anchored under the lee of Lundy Island; but presently an English ship of 60 guns was seen making for the same shelter. The position of the Coetquen was critical, but Trouin cut his cable, and went out on one side of the island whilst the enemy was coming in on the other. It was some time before the line-of-battle ship could get round and follow in chase. The Coetquen sailed well, night came on, and she escaped; and, after capturing two West Indian ships laden with sugar, Trouin returned to St. Malo. In this cruise he had undoubtedly shown himself possessed of the ready wit and presence of mind requisite for his adventurous profession. The strain which had been put upon him enforced the lessons which were presented to him, and

under such circumstances a man such as René Trouin learns quickly.

Towards the end of the year his brother gave him the command of the *Profond*, of 32 guns ; a king's ship equipped for cruising on terms of partnership between the government and the house of Trouin. The government provided the ship with her rigging, naval stores, and armament, receiving in return one-fourth of all prizes. The merchants found the officers and men, their pay and provisions. The ship, though built and fitted as a man of war, was to all intents a privateer, although probably better suited to the work than an old merchant ship turned into a cruiser by the simple process of putting a few guns on board. The *Profond* sailed from Brest in the last days of December 1692 ; but she proved a dull sailer, and her cruise was every way unsuccessful and unfortunate. A Swedish man-of-war met her in the night, mistook her for an Algerine pirate, and engaged her warmly till daybreak ; fever broke out amongst the crew ; she had eighty men sick ; and finally, early in March, had to put into Lisbon in great distress. On returning to Brest, Trouin was, in June, appointed to the *Hercule*, of 28 guns, also a king's ship, fitted out in the same way as the *Profond*, and after a fairly successful cruise, came back to Brest in the end of the year. His next ship, still on the same footing, was the *Diligente*, of 36 guns and 250 men, in which he sailed from Brest on 16 January, 1694, and after cruising for a couple of months off Cape St. Vincent and the entrance of the Straits, was joined in the Tagus by the *Hercule*, now commanded, for the same owners, by a M. de la Bouexière, and having, as second captain—or, as we

would say, first lieutenant—Trouin's cousin, Jacques Boscher. Off Ushant they fell in with four Dutch merchant ships, which would appear to have been East Indiamen; at any rate, they carried from twenty to thirty guns; and the one that was engaged by the *Hercule* succeeded in beating her off. The *Diligente*, of greater force, and more daringly commanded, captured the commodore of the squadron, but the others escaped. The prize was sent in under the command of Boscher; and, Trouin separating himself from La Bouëxiere, by whose misconduct, cowardice, or ill-fortune he felt himself aggrieved, went for a solitary cruise in the English Channel.

On 3 May he was chased by the *Prince of Orange*, of 60 guns,¹ and finding that the *Diligente* could leave her at pleasure, he kept ahead under easy sail, flying the English ensign, which, presently, by way of insult and bravado, he tied up into a weft, thus making to his pursuer the signal to 'come on board.' Hereupon the *Prince of Orange* fired three or four guns at him, which Trouin—who about this time began to be publicly called Du Gué—returned, forgetting or careless of the fact that

¹ A hired ship, but evidently of force, even if not quite of sixty guns. She was on her way from Milford to Plymouth, with a fleet of colliers in convoy, and her log for this day reads:—'April 23 (O S.).—This morning see a sail in the SSE, who came beging down to us, which proved to be a French privateer of fifty guns, who, finding how he wronged us in sailing, played with us, we using our endeavour to speak with him, firing several shot at him, and he too at us again, under English colours; but viewing us well, made sail from us, being, as I suppose, for purchase which might be easierly gotten. Land's End, SE½E., 6 leagues' 'May 8 (O S.).—Yesterday evening anchored in Plymouth Sound.' Her captain at this time was Samuel Vincent, afterwards favourably known in his association with Benbow in the West Indies.

he was under English colours. And so they separated. But nine days later, on 12 May, the *Diligente* fell in with a squadron of six ships of the line then cruising between the Land's End and Cape Clear, which chased her in amongst the Scilly Islands, and having shot away her fore and main topmasts, captured her, notwithstanding all the fine things Captain Trouin du Gué meant to do if untoward fate had not prevented him. The affair, as simply described from the English point of view, offers nothing very remarkable. I quote from the journal of Captain Thomas Warren, of the *Monk*, merely translating his dates into ordinary reckoning:—

May 2 (O.S.), 1694:—At 4 this morning had sight of a sail SE of us. Commodore made a signal to chase—a hard gale—all gave chase. At 10 saw Cape Cornwall, at which time I was within five miles of the chase—the *Adventure* close by her—he hoisted his colours, and the *Adventure* his—the former, a white ensign—the *Dragon* next to the *Adventure*. All run in between Sicily and the Seven Stones. At 11 the *Adventure* fired several broadsides into her, he in the meantime plying his stern chase. At noon were abreast of St. Mary's Sound, where several ships lay at anchor. Wind NNE, hard gale with rain. At half-past two the *Adventure* shot the Frenchman's main-topmast by the board, then the *Dragon* fired a whole broadside into her. I being at the same time under his stern, gave him a broadside also, upon which he struck. My boat was the first aboard and brought the captain and the rest of the officers aboard of me. She was one of the King of France's men-of-war carrying thirty-six guns, but could mount forty.

After this the *Adventure*, and the next day the *Dragon*, took the prize in tow, and at noon on 5 May (O.S.) the squadron, consisting of the *Monk*, *Mary*,

Dunkirk, Ruby, Dragon, Adventure, and prize anchored in the Sound. On the following day the French captain and officers were sent on shore to prison. This, then, in its naked simplicity, is the English story; but as related in the 'Memoirs of Du Guay-Trouin' it is something much grander, and puts a very different colour on the business. Yet I feel bound to consider Du Guay-Trouin's account: firstly, because it is that which the French accept as history, and on which, or similar stories, they to a great extent base their estimate of the man; and, secondly, because I cannot say that it is not correct. It was, indeed, written long after the event, but the broad facts agree with those noted at the time by Captain Warren. What Du Guay-Trouin says is, that finding himself jammed between the enemy's squadron and the coast of England, he was obliged to fight.

One of the English ships named the Adventure first overtook me, and we maintained a running fight for nearly four hours, before any other of their ships could come up. . . . At length my two topmasts were shot away; on which the Adventure ranged up alongside me, a short pistol-shot off, and hauled up her courses. Seeing her so near, it occurred to me to run foul of her and board her with my whole crew. Forthwith I ordered such of the officers as were near to send the people on deck, got ready the grappnels, and put the helm over. We were just on the point of hooking on to her, when unfortunately one of my lieutenants, looking out through a port and seeing the two ships so close together, took it into his head there was some mistake, as he could not think that, under the circumstances, I had any intention of boarding; and so, of himself, ordered the helm to be reversed. I had no idea of what had been done, and was impatiently waiting for the two ships to clash together, ready to throw myself on board the enemy; but seeing that my ship did not obey her

helm, I ran to the wheel, and found that it had been changed without my order. I had it again jammed hard over; but perceived, with the keenest vexation, that the captain of the *Adventure*, having guessed by the expression of my face what I had meant to do, had let fall his courses, and was sheering off. We had been so near that my bowsprit had broken his taffrail; but the mistake of my lieutenant made me lose the opportunity of one of the most surprising adventures ever heard tell of.¹ In the determination I was in to perish or to capture this ship, which was much the fastest sailer of the squadron, it is more than probable that I should have succeeded, and should thus have taken back to France a much stronger ship than that which I abandoned. And, not to speak of the credit which would have attached to the execution of such a plan, it is quite certain that, being dismasted, there was absolutely no other way for me to escape from forces so superior.

So he was surrounded, and brought to close action by five of the ships, whereupon his men began to fly from their guns and to take refuge in the hold.

I was busy trying to put a stop to this panic, had cut down one and pistolled another, when, to crown my misfortune, fire broke out in the gun-room. The fear of being blown up made it necessary for me to go below; but having got the fire put out, I had a tubful of grenades brought me, and began throwing them down into the hold; by which means I compelled the deserters to come up and to man some of the lower deck guns; but when I went up on the poop I found, to my astonishment and vexation, that some cowardly rascal had taken advantage of my absence to haul down the colours. I ordered them to be hoisted again; but my officers represented that to do so would be simply giving up the rem-

¹ Unfortunately no log or journal of the *Adventure* for this date has been preserved; it would have been interesting to have had her captain's version of this.

nant of my ship's company to be butchered by the English, who would give no quarter if the flag was hoisted again after being struck for so long, and that further resistance was hopeless, as the ship was dismasted.

He was still hesitating when he was knocked over by a spent shot and stunned. When he came to himself the ship was in possession of the English. He was taken on board the *Monk*, whose captain treated him with much kindness and generosity: 'with as much care,' he says, 'as if I had been his own son.' After cruising for twenty days¹ the squadron returned to Plymouth, and Du Guay-Trouin, after receiving many civilities from the officers, was allowed to go about a prisoner at large, making many pleasant acquaintances, and an especially intimate one with a young person whom he describes as '*une fort jolie marchande*,' an extremely pretty shop-girl. This good time was rudely put a stop to by the Prince of Orange coming in, and her captain accusing him of firing on him under English colours. On this charge he was put under close arrest, though his friends were allowed to come and see him; amongst others '*la jolie marchande*,' with whom one of his guards, a refugee French officer, now fell desperately in love. He implored his prisoner's good offices with the girl, and between the two the poor refugee, was fooled to the top of his bent, whilst Trouin ran down to the wharf, got on board a boat already provided, and with four of his companions pushed out to sea. It was ten

¹ This possibly means from the time of leaving Plymouth; the dates of Captain Warren's journal show that it does not mean from the time of the capture. But as the *Memoires* were written many years afterwards, a mistake of this kind would be pardonable.

o'clock in the evening of 18 June.¹ As they passed out through the Sound, they were hailed by two men-of-war lying there. 'Fishers,' they answered, and went on without hindrance.

All night, and all the next day, they rowed on with but little wind. As night again came on a breeze sprang up, and they made sail; but being worn out with fatigue they all went to sleep, Trouin holding the tiller. Suddenly they were struck by a squall and nearly swamped. Fortunately, as the steersman woke, let fly the sheet and put the helm hard up, the boat answered the helm and righted; but she was full of water, all their provisions were spoiled, and they were some fifteen leagues from the land. However, they managed to bale out the boat with their hats, and about eight o'clock on the following evening made the coast of Bretagne, where they stumbled into the nearest village, ate black bread, drank milk, and slept the sleep of the weary on a bundle of clean straw. Afterwards they made the best of their way to St. Malo, where Trouin learned that his brother, La Barbinais, was at Rochefort, engaged in fitting out the king's ship François, of 48 guns, intending to appoint him to the command as soon as he was exchanged. On this news, M. du Gué was speedily at Rochefort and on board the François, which he found ready for sea, and in her he started at once in search of fortune.

Being well to the westward, he met it on 13 January 1695, in the shape of the Nonsuch, also of 48 guns,

¹ In the *Mémoires* the time is said to be 'vers les six heures du soir,' and the date is not mentioned. As it appears from the context that it was dark, the *six* is undoubtedly a misprint for *dux*; and it is so given by Cunat, who refers to the official depositions.

convoying a number of mast ships from New England. One of these, named the Falcon, evidently a stout ship and well armed, mounting, according to Du Guay-Trouin, 38 guns,¹ he engaged sharply, and, having crippled her, ran down to the Nonsuch, in the smoke of a broadside ranged alongside her, and threw his grapnels, intending to board; but he was compelled to haul off by a fire which broke out in the poop of the Nonsuch and raged for a while with great violence. Presently the fire was extinguished and he returned to the charge; but as he again threw his grapnels, fire broke out in his own foretop; the foremast was enveloped in flames, and he was obliged, for a second time, to haul off. Before he could get the fire under, it was dark; the convoy had dispersed, and he, and the two English ships with which he had been engaged, lay to, repairing their damages. With daylight on the 14th he renewed his attack on the Nonsuch, with great guns and small-arms, and was on the point of again attempting to board her, when the fall of her fore and main masts obliged him hastily to sheer off; then as the Nonsuch could no longer defend herself or escape, he went to take possession of the Falcon, which was trying to make off. Having captured her, he returned to the Nonsuch, whose mizenmast had followed the others, and which, being quite helpless, hauled down her flag on his approach.

This is Du Guay-Trouin's account of this engagement, and is in the main fully confirmed by the evidence given at the court-martial on the officers of the Nonsuch, after their return from captivity. No mention was, indeed,

¹ He speaks of her throughout as the Boston. Her name was certainly Falcon, but it may have been distinctively Falcon of Boston.

made of the fire in the poop, or of the enemy's attempts to board; but the independent actions with the Falcon and the Nonsuch, the crippling them separately, and the surrender of the Nonsuch on the 14th, when she lay a helpless log on the water, all these are clearly enough stated, and would quite bear out the judgment of the court that Captain Taylor had not made the necessary preparations for fight, and had thus exposed the convoy to great hazard. Of Captain Taylor's courage, however, there was no question. With a really very superior force—for the Nonsuch and Falcon together were far more than a match for the François, which, nominally, was not more powerful than the Nonsuch alone—he had been taken at such disadvantage as to be altogether inferior; but he fought his ship bravely, and fell, endeavouring to repair his fault. After his death no further defence was made; and, indeed, none was possible.

This Nonsuch¹ was the ship which, in 1689, had captured the *Railleuse* and *Serpente*, and carried Jean Bart and Forbin prisoners to Plymouth. Du Guay-Trouin, referring to this circumstance, says that he found the commissions of these officers in the captain's cabin. I am quite unable to explain this; nor can I understand how they could possibly be there. The statement that the ship was commanded by the same captain is certainly wrong. In the engagement with the *Railleuse* and *Serpente*, the Nonsuch was commanded by Captain Roomcoyle, who was killed, as well as the master, and was succeeded by the boatswain, who, being made a captain, served honourably for many years, and

¹ See *ante*, p. 277.

died a natural death in 1702. It does not appear that Captain Taylor had had any connection with the *Nonsuch* till his promotion to her, in North America, a few months before his death; though he may have been a midshipman or mate in her in 1689. It is the only suggestion that I can offer, and for it I have no authority.

It was already blowing hard when the English ships surrendered. They had scarcely been taken possession of when a violent gale sprang up. The *Nonsuch* was a wreck; and it was with great difficulty that Trouin's cousin Boscher succeeded in getting her into Port Louis. The *Falcon*, shattered by shot and the storm, fell in with four Dutch privateers off Ushant, and was recaptured: the *François* herself, having lost her mizenmast and both fore and main topmasts, managed to fetch into Brest. The story of his achievement ensured Trouin an honourable welcome. France began to be proud of him, and the king sent him a sword of honour, to which M. de Pontchartrain, then Secretary of State for the Navy, added a flattering letter, desiring him, in conclusion, to refit his ship as soon as possible, and to join the squadron under the Marquis de Nesmond then at Rochelle. This he did.

The squadron consisted, besides the *François*, of four ships of from 50 to 62 guns, and putting to sea, presently—on 26 April, 1695—met three English ships in the chops of the Channel. These were the *Hope* of 70 guns, *Anglesea* of 48. and the *Roebuck* fire-ship. They had sailed from the Nore in the end of March, in company with the *Captain* of 70 guns, the *Montagu* of 60, and a large convoy for the Straits; but two days before,

by the negligence of the officer of the watch on board the Hope, they had parted company, and were now caught at a disadvantage by this very superior force. As the French squadron bore down against them, one, the St. Antoine, of 56 guns, attacked the Anglesea, and endeavoured to lay her on board; but her captain, M. de la Villestreux, being killed at the critical moment, the attempt was repulsed, and her fore topmast being shot away about the same time, she fell astern, whilst the Anglesea made good her escape. The Roebuck, also, having no force, and under the circumstances being useless as a fire-ship, made off unpursued, and the five Frenchmen clustered round the Hope, which, after stoutly defending herself for some seven or eight hours, was forced to yield; having, according to the deposition of her lieutenant, 'both pumps going most of the time, and seven feet water in the hold; we had lost all our masts, and the ship rolled so much that we could not manage any of our guns.' For his gallant defence Captain Robinson was rightly commended by the court-martial, which recognised that the loss of the Hope was due to her having separated from her consorts and convoy; the circumstances of which were somewhat curious. On sailing from the Nore, two of her lieutenants were left behind on impress service; she had only one lieutenant on board, and her captain was most of the time sick and prostrate with alternate attacks of gout and gravel. Her ship's company consisted, for the most part, of newly raised, perfectly raw men, and by the captain's orders, the one lieutenant devoted himself to day duty, and to the exercising these raw men at the great guns, the night watches being taken by the master and the senior

mate. On the night of 23-24 April, this mate had the middle watch, that is from midnight to four o'clock; he let the ship get taken aback, paid her off on the wrong tack, made no signal to the other ships, and said nothing about it to the captain, who was confined to bed with an attack of gravel, and might probably, if he had been disturbed, have made use of unparliamentary, not to say un-Christian language. The weather was thick; and nothing was known about it till daylight, when the lieutenant came on deck; but it was then too late. All this was proved to the satisfaction of the court, which decided that the officer of the watch, the mate, was guilty of negligence and disobedience. Had no particular result attended on his fault, possibly no severe notice would have been taken of it. As it was, his sentence seems, in the present day, peculiar. It was ordered 'that he be carried with a halter about his neck from ship to ship, to all the ships at Chatham and Gillingham, and his crime be read by beat of drum by each ship's side; that all the pay due to him in his Majesty's service be forfeited to the chest at Chatham; and that he be rendered incapable of for ever serving his Majesty in any capacity for the future as an officer.' That the mate was very much in the wrong is not to be disputed; whether the admiralty, that sent a 70-gun ship to sea with a perfectly raw ship's company, an invalid captain, and only one lieutenant, was not very much more in the wrong, is a question that was not raised at the court-martial, but which can scarcely help suggesting itself to a thoughtful reader.

On the return of the squadron to Brest, Trouin, still in the *François*, was ordered to cruise to the northward,

towards the Orkneys and Shetlands, with the *Fortune*, of 56 guns, in company ; and, after some fruitless months, was coming south round the west of Ireland, when, near the Blaskets, he fell in with three large East Indiamen, all heavily armed. But an armed merchantman is no match for a properly equipped man-of-war, even though of the same nominal force, and, after a stout resistance, these three were taken possession of by the *François* and *Fortune*, and conveyed to Port Louis. Du Guay-Trouin, in his *Mémoires*, says that 'the riches with which they were laden gave a profit of more than 2,000 per cent., in addition to all the pillage which it had not been possible to prevent.' The English accounts estimate the loss roughly at a million sterling. Possibly on the strength of his share of this money, M. Trouin du Gué started for Paris.

He was still in the first flush of youth, and we may fairly suppose that the spoils of the Indies lay uneasy in his pockets ; but in his *Mémoires* he attributes his journey to his desire to be introduced to the Count de Toulouse and to M. de Pontchartrain. The latter was pleased to present him to the king, for whom, he says, 'from my earliest youth I had felt an extreme love and reverence. On actually seeing this great monarch my admiration was redoubled. He deigned to appear satisfied with my humble services, and I went out from the presence-chamber with my heart deeply touched by the sweetness and nobility which marked his words and his most trifling actions, so that my desire to render myself worthy of his esteem became still more ardent.' He went, therefore to Port Louis, and fitted out the *Non-such*, or, as he calls her, the *Sans-Pareil*, reducing her

armament to forty-two guns, and on 7 July, 1696, he sailed for a cruise on the coast of Spain.

The Sans-Pareil, being an English-built ship, lent herself readily to a privateer's ruse; and, having learned that three Dutch merchant ships were at Vigo, waiting for an English man-of-war which was appointed to convoy them, M. du Gué appeared off that port one morning at daybreak, and brought the ship to in English fashion and under English colours. Suspecting no evil, two of the Dutch ships came out at once; the third, fortunately for herself, was not quite ready to sail, and so escaped. In charge of his two prizes, laden with masts and naval stores, Trouin was making his way back to Port Louis, when, on the morning of 24 July, at daybreak, he found himself close in with and to leeward of the whole English fleet, then cruising in the Bay of Biscay, under the command of Lord Berkeley.¹

'There was no time,' he says, 'for hesitation: I ordered the prize officers to hoist Dutch colours, and to run away to leeward, saluting me with seven guns each; and trusting to the goodness and soundness of the Sans-Pareil, I stood towards the fleet, as boldly and peaceably as if I had really been one of their number rejoining after having spoken the Dutchmen. Two capital ships and a 36-gun frigate had at first left the fleet to overhaul me; but on seeing what I was doing, the ships returned to their station—the frigate—impelled by her unlucky fate—persisted in endeavouring to speak the two

¹ This fleet left the Channel on July 4 (June 24, O.S.), and anchored at Spithead on its return on August 9 (July 30, O.S.), between which dates, therefore, the incident above described must have taken place. Eugène Sue, giving a copy of Du Guay-Trouin's official letter (*Hist de la Marine française*, tom. v., p. 110), dates it 'Au Port Louis, le 30 mai, 1796'—that is with two palpable blunders. the letter is, however, I believe, genuine.

prizes, and I saw that she was rapidly coming up with them. I had by this time joined the fleet, tranquil enough in appearance, though inwardly I was fuming at the prospect of my two prizes being taken by this frigate: and as I perceived that my ship sailed much better than those of the enemy who were near me, I kept away little by little, at the same time forereaching on them, and then suddenly bearing up, ran down to place myself between the prizes and the frigate. I should have liked to lay this on board and carry her in sight of the whole fleet; but her captain, being suspicious, would not let me get within musket-shot of him, and sent his boat to me. But when the boat was half-way, her people made out that we were French, and turned to go back; on which, seeing that we were discovered, I hoisted my white flag and poured my broadside into the frigate. She answered with hers; but not being able to sustain my fire, she hauled her wind, and with a signal of distress flying, stood to meet the capital ships, which hastily ran down towards us: as they stopped to render her assistance, and to pick up her boat, I was able to rejoin my prizes, and without misadventure to take them to Port Louis.'

This is Du Guay-Trouin's unsupported, uncorroborated narrative; but it seems to me probable enough and perfectly credible. There is no question that, with a crew of nearly three times the numerical strength of the frigate's, and favoured by the surprise, he would have carried her, if only he had been able to lay her on board. It would have been a brilliant feat, but really not a very difficult one. The incident is one not likely to be found, and it is not found, in our English histories. It may have been mentioned by Lord Berkeley in his official report of the cruise; but, unfortunately, Lord Berkeley's letters, or, indeed, any admiral's letters of that date, have not been preserved, at least in their

proper place. More probably still, it may be mentioned in the log of the frigate, or of one or other of the capital ships; but not having their names, I have not yet been able to find any traces of it. However, as I have said, I incline to believe that Du Guay-Trouin's narrative, as it stands, is a fair description of what occurred, and gives a correct though curious idea of the very lax organisation of the fleet, when a stranger could thus come into it and not be immediately detected. But notwithstanding the laxness in this respect, Lord Berkeley's cruise in the Bay was by no means an idle one. He met, indeed, no formidable enemy at sea; but applying himself to harrying the coast, he burned all the villages, houses, and shipping, and swept off all the cattle of the islands Groix, Houat, and Hoedic; whilst a detached squadron, sent into the Isle of Re, bombarded and destroyed the towns of St. Martin and Olonne.

On Du Guay-Trouin's return to Port Louis he wrote an account of the cruise to M. de Pontchartrain, describing his success at Vigo, his meeting with and escape from the English fleet, and passing on to speak in fuller detail of a circumstance which—more, indeed, than his mere adventures—bears on the point to which I have already called attention, the peculiar relation and attitude of officers of the navy to the officers of privateers, even when employed in the king's service. It is for this reason that I give here the account of it as written by himself: ¹—

Off the Isle Groix I met a large ship which for some time did not show any flag, and flew no pennant nor any other

¹ Not in his *Mémoires*, but in the official letter, quoted by Sue (*Hist. de la Marine française*, tom. v. p. 110, &c.) with many mistakes or misprints, both of place and time.

mark of distinction. I hailed her, and was answered that she was from Bayonne. The rate at which we passed each other did not permit me to hear more; but I and all my officers supposed that she was a Bayonne privateer. Shortly after, I lowered a boat to send a message to the prizes, on seeing which the ship hoisted her pennant, fired several musket-shots at the boat, and then began firing great guns. At last, one of her shot cut the halliard of the boat's sail; on which I went straight to the ship to speak to the captain and ask why he had thus fired on me without any provocation. I was told to come on board; when the captain, far from hearing what I had to say, threatened, in the most violent manner, to have me ducked from the yard arm,¹ and that, although I protested, as was truly the case, that we had believed him to be a Bayonne privateer. This threat, so contrary to what seems to me due to my rank, would have goaded me to some extreme measures if I had not considered my own private honour as subordinate to the king's orders; so that I made no reply beyond saying that I should complain to your Grandeur, in whose justice I had every confidence. . . . Your Grandeur is not unaware that several of the officers of the navy look on our success with anything rather than pleasure; as this one showed very clearly on this occasion by thus insulting me, whilst he behaved civilly enough to the skippers of the two Olonne vessels in company, who had committed the same fault as I had, if fault there was; neither threatening to duck them, nor making use of the abusive language which I pass over in silence; for your Grandeur well knows that such unmeasured threats cannot but cause bitterness. This, then, Monseigneur, is what makes me call on you for justice, without which I shall be unwillingly compelled to give up the idea of my intended cruise: and, in fact, this affair is

¹ 'De me faire donner la cale'—to have me keel-hauled, but keel-hauling did not usually mean hauling under the keel, though sometimes it did: ordinarily it meant nothing more than tying the criminal up to the yard-arm, and letting him go by the run.

of importance to all my associates, who—but for your protection—would be daily exposed to similar outrages. The captain of whom I complain is M. de Feuquières, commanding the *Entreprenant*.

Of the steps which M. de Pontchartrain took to salve the wounded feelings of the insulted privateer, or to restrain the jealousy and insolence of the king's officers, no mention is made; and not the least curious part of the whole transaction is that there is no allusion to it in the *Mémoires*. But when he wrote these in his old age, Du Guay-Trouin was a 'Lieutenant-General of the king's naval's forces,' had commanded fleets and expeditions, and had probably learned to consider himself as one of the nobility and an officer of the navy, having altogether different interests from those of a plebeian, captain of a privateer.

When the *Sans-Pareil* was refitted she again put to sea, having in company the *Léonore* of 16 guns, commanded by Étienne Trouin, René's younger brother, and at this time not quite twenty years old. After a short cruise on the north coast of Spain they were in want of water, and attempted to force a landing in the face of the Spanish militia, who mustered to oppose them. A sharp conflict took place, in which Étienne received a mortal wound. He was carried on board the *Sans-Pareil*, and died in the course of two days. The elder brother was deeply affected by the loss of this youth, whom he tenderly loved; and returning shortly afterwards to Brest, he went into retirement for several months, sick in mind and body, haunted by the memory of his loss, and the idea of the boy expiring in his arms. It was not till the beginning of the next year, 1697, that

he returned to active life, and then only at the persuasion of M. Desclouzeaux, the intendant of the navy at Brest, who was fitting out a squadron of three ships, apparently on his own account, although not improbably at the charge of the government; for, indeed, it is impossible to conceive a wider opening for speculation and appropriation than that afforded by allowing the intendant thus to equip a private squadron. The allowing a foreman of labourers to keep hogs in the biscuit storehouse, whilst his wife kept a marine store outside, as happened, once at least, at Portsmouth, was trifling in comparison.¹

Of this squadron, sent out specially to look for a Dutch merchant fleet from Spain, Du Guay-Trouin took the command, in the *St. Jacques des Victoires*, of 48 guns; the *Sans-Pareil*, commanded by his cousin, Jacques Boscher, was the second; and the third was the little *Léonore*. They sailed from Brest towards the middle of March, and on the 22nd, being then some thirty miles north-west from Ushant, they sighted the object of their cruise, but convoyed by three ships of war, two of fifty, and one of thirty guns. Du Guay-Trouin did not consider his force equal to the attack of such an escort, and for two days hung on to it, hoping for some opportunity of getting in amongst the convoy. But on the 24th he was accidentally joined by two privateers out of *St. Malo*, the one of thirty, the other of thirty-eight guns, and, so reinforced, he resolved to attack. The three Dutchmen were lying to, to windward of their convoy and in line ahead, the smallest ship in the middle; and

¹ *Parliamentary Reports*, 1783.

Du Guay-Trouin determined to push on in the *St. Jacques*, and engage the Dutch commodore, who headed the line in the *Delft*. The *Sans-Pareil* was to engage the rearmost ship, the *Hondslaardijk*, and the two *St. Malo* men were to pit themselves against the frigate in the middle, whilst the *Leonore* went in amongst the convoy. The allotment of antagonists was rendered un-availing by the action of the *Hondslaardijk*, which prevented the *St. Jacques* from passing her, and the two ships fell foul of each other, whilst the *Sans-Pareil* pressed on to attack the *Delft*, which received her with extreme warmth. Fire broke out under her poop, exploded a number of cartridges, killed or blew overboard more than eighty men, and threatened to extend to the magazine, so that Boscher was forced to cut loose his grapnels, and to bear away as fast as possible. Du Guay-Trouin had meantime thrown half his ship's company on board the *Hondslaardijk*, and without much difficulty had made himself master of her. He now pushed on to support or to avenge Boscher, and ran his ship aboard the *Delft*.

'This new attack,' he tells us, 'was very bloody, both by the very heavy fire, on both sides, of guns, muskets, and grenades, and by the splendid courage of the Baron de Wassenæer,¹ who received me with astonishing boldness. Four several times the bravest of my officers and men were repulsed; and so many of them were killed that, in spite of my vexation and efforts, I was constrained to bear away in order to give a short breathing-time to my people, who were some-

¹ Willem, Baron van Wassenæer Starreburgh, nephew of that Opdam van Wassenæer who commanded the Dutch fleet in the great fight off Lowestoft on 3-13 June, 1665, and lost his life in the blowing up of the *Eendracht*.

what disheartened, and also to repair damages, which were more than slight.'

The two privateers had meantime captured the Dutch frigate, and Du Guay-Trouin now ordered the largest of these, the *Faluère*, of 38 guns, to occupy the attention of the *Delft*, while the *St. Jacques* was lying by. *Sans-Pareil*, *St. Jacques*, or *Faluère*, it was much the same to Van Wassenauer, who received his new assailant with his old determination; and the *Faluère*, roughly handled and having lost her captain, ran down to leeward as her consorts had done before her. Du Guay-Trouin hailed her to follow him, and together they would avenge the death of her captain.

'And then,' he says, 'with head down, I rushed against the redoubtable *Baron*, resolved to conquer or to perish. This last act was so sharp and so bloody that every one of the Dutch officers was killed or wounded. Wassenauer himself received four very dangerous wounds, and fell on his quarter-deck, where he was seized, his sword still in his hand. The *Faluère* had her share in the engagement, running alongside of me, and sending me forty men on board as a reinforcement. More than half of my own crew perished in this action. I lost in it one of my cousins, first lieutenant of my own ship, and two other kinsmen on board the *Sans-Pareil*, with many other officers killed or wounded.'¹

The night following this battle was extremely stormy, and the ships, with shattered rigging and torn hulls, leaking at every seam, with crews weakened and exhausted, were in a position of extreme peril. The *St. Jacques* was kept afloat only by pumping and baling, in

¹ De Jonge (*Geschiedenis van het Nederlandsche Zeewezen*, vol. iii. pp. 521 *et seq.*) accepts Du Guay-Trouin's account of this stubborn fight as substantially correct.

which work the Dutch prisoners were made to assist, and by throwing overboard all her upper-deck and quarter-deck guns, spare masts, shot, everything that could go. But the horrors of the night, the dead and dying below, the ship scarcely floating, the swelling waves threatening each moment to engulf her, the wild howling of the storm, and the iron-bound coast of Bretagne to leeward, were all together such as to try severely the courage of the few remaining officers and men. At daybreak, however, the wind went down; they found themselves in with the Isle Groix and the Breton coast; on their firing guns and making signals of distress, a number of boats came off to their assistance; and in this guise was the St. Jacques taken into Port Louis, followed in the course of the day by the three Dutch ships of war, twelve of the merchant ships, the Léonore, and the two St. Malo privateers. The Sans-Pareil did not get in till the next day, 'after having been twenty times on the point of perishing by the fire and by the tempest.'

Du Guay-Trouin's success naturally won for him a distinguished renown. He had captured three Dutch ships superior in force to his own three. The St. Malo men were probably overlooked, and an exaggerated account of his victory went abroad; but in any case his victory was brilliant enough, and all the more so by reason of the brilliant defence of Baron van Wassenaer. It was so considered by the king on the report of the Count de Pontchartrain; and he rewarded the service by sending Du Guay-Trouin a commission as commander in the navy (*capitaine de frégate*), on which the young commander set off to Paris, and was again presented to the king,

who was pleased personally to express his satisfaction, and some little time after to allow him to equip—at his own expense, or at that of his friends—two of the royal ships, *Solide* and *Oiseau*. With these and two private ships he was on the point of sailing for a cruise, when the Peace of Ryswyk, in September 1697, put an end to his hopes of glory or of gain. When war with England and Holland again broke out in 1702, Du Guay-Trouin was a king's officer; and the story of his career from this time belongs rather to the history of the war, in its connection with which it ought to be considered. I do not propose, therefore, to follow out the events of his riper age with the same exactness with which I have dwelt on those of his earlier years, whilst he was forcing his way into notice; but some of his adventures have a purely personal interest, and as such tend to illustrate the character of the man. This is one.

On 23 November, 1704, being then in the *Jason* of 54 guns, having in company the *Auguste* of the same force, and the frigate *Valeur* commanded by his brother Nicolas, he met, in the Soundings, the two English ships *Elizabeth* of 70, and the *Chatham* of 48 guns. That the *Elizabeth*, brought to close action by the *Jason*, hauled down her flag after a feeble defence, is to be read in our own chronicles,¹ as well as the wretched fate which fell on her captain as the punishment of his misconduct: the *Auguste*, being a heavy sailer, was unable to overtake the *Chatham*, which thus escaped. On their way back to Brest with their prize they fell in with two large Dutch privateers, one of which, the *Amazone* of 40 guns,

¹ Charnock, *Biographia Navalis*, vol. ii. p. 386.

they captured after a stout resistance ; but the *Valeur*, having gone on an independent cruise, and after some success, met a large privateer, which brought her to close action. The *Valeur* made good her defence, and escaped ; but during the action the young Trouin had his hip shattered by a cannon ball, and survived his return to Brest only a few days.

When the *Jason* and *Auguste* were refitted, Du Guay-Trouin sailed once more in quest of adventures, and on the night of the second day again fell in with the *Chatham*. When morning broke the *Jason* and *Auguste* had her between them, within musket-shot, and a sharp action began, which continued for several hours, the *Chatham* putting herself before the wind and making all sail in her endeavour to escape. So intent were the pursuers on the chase, that they suddenly found themselves at no great distance from the English fleet, then cruising in the Soundings, under the command of Sir George Byng, and towards which the *Chatham*, whether intentionally or by accident, had led them. The position was now reversed, and the *Jason* and *Auguste* were chased by the fastest ships of the squadron, which came up with them rapidly, the *Auguste* being at all times a very dull sailer. On this, after a hasty consultation, the Frenchmen separated ; the *Auguste* keeping well to windward, and the *Jason* going away free, hoping to draw the English ships after her in a wild-goose chase. But the English were numerous enough to separate too. According to Du Guay-Trouin, six ships followed the *Auguste*, engaged as they came up with her, and took her after a stubborn fight. The *Jason*, on her side, was overtaken and brought to action by the *Worcester*, or, as

Du Guay-Trouin has preferred to call her, the Honster ;¹ only the Worcester was of 50 guns, and the Honster of 64 ; a difference which explains Du Guay-Trouin's statement that after a short engagement, yard-arm to yard-arm, the Honster found herself very much mauled and dropped astern. 'I should have taken her right off,' he says, 'if she had not borne up very sharply, and if'—it is difficult not to notice the French use of the *if* in such cases,—'if she had not been sustained by several large ships close at hand, which would have fallen upon me before I could have got clear of her.' So he kept on his way, gaining on his pursuers, till, some three-quarters of an hour afterwards, he was again engaged by the Honster, which this time, however, was content to hang on his quarters, firing as opportunity offered ; and so midnight came, and with it the wind died away. The other English ships had crept up, and now lay becalmed in different directions, all round the Jason.

'They did not annoy me,' he says, 'for they were persuaded that I could not escape them, and that at daybreak they would capture my ship with less risk and greater ease. I was myself so convinced of this, that I called together my officers to tell them that, seeing no probability of saving the king's ship, I was determined to maintain the honour of his arms to the last extremity ; that I therefore meant to make no reply to the fire of the ships which surrounded us, but to steer straight for the commander-in-chief of the enemy ; that I myself would take the helm until we were grappled with him ; and that as such an attack would be unexpected by him, we might have a chance of performing a brilliant feat before succumbing to

¹ Honster in the *Mémoires*, and thence in all published French accounts. It was possibly written Houser, which for a Frenchman would not be a bad shot at the real name.

numbers; and that in any case the king's flag should not, whilst I lived, be hauled down by any hands but those of his enemies.'

After this discourse, he says, he felt his mind more at ease, and went below to lie down; but finding it impossible to sleep, he came again on deck, and spent the time in looking at the ships by which he was surrounded, and especially at that of the commandant, distinguished by her three lanterns at the stern and a light in the main-top. I will let him tell the rest.

In the midst of this melancholy occupation I fancied, about half an hour before daybreak, that the horizon right ahead of us was growing black, and that this blackness was increasing. I judged that we should have the breeze from that quarter, and as my courses were hauled up and my topsails lowered on account of the calm, I had them set at once, without any noise, and all the other sails as well, ready to catch the breeze which was coming up. then with what oars I had, I got the ship's head round, bringing her broadside to the expected wind. It really did come; and as my sails were all ready, set and trimmed, I forged ahead at its very first breath. The enemy, who had gone to sleep in confidence, were quite unprepared: they were all taken aback, and before they could make sail and wear their ships I was a good gun-shot away; and as the wind was freshening, I rapidly increased my distance. The Honster alone could get near me, and cannonaded me on the quarter, but could not sustain my broadsides. In this way the chase lasted till noon, by which time it was blowing fresh, and I had left the other ships far astern. I began now to drop the Honster, and looked on myself as though risen from the dead, for I had firmly resolved to be buried under the ruins of the poor Jason.

In relating this I am obliged to trust almost entirely to the *Mémoires*; for the account given in our English

histories is so curiously incorrect, that no dependence whatever can be placed on it. It would appear from these that the Jason and Auguste were chased and the Auguste captured in July or August 1703; and that the ships which captured her were the Chatham, Greenwich, and Medway.¹ But there is no doubt whatever that the Auguste was captured about the middle or end of January 1705, the date to which, by inference, Du Guay-Trouin's *Mémoires* would assign it; and it is equally certain that neither the Chatham, Greenwich, nor Medway was engaged with the Auguste. The minutes of the court-martial on the wretched captain of the Elizabeth prove that the ship was taken, as I have already said, on 12 November (O.S.), 1704; and a letter from Captain Bokenham, of the Chatham, dated 'Crookhaven, 17 January (O.S.), 1704-5,' says:—

On the 18th past, in the night, I lost company with the admiral, and the next morning by daylight fell in with Mouns^r Dugee in the Jason and L'August, the two ships that took the Elizabeth. They both gave me chase till about one in the afternoon. Soon after I saw a sail, and gave chase and came up with him (being the Constable of St. Malo, of 30 guns and 169 men), who after half an hour's dispute struck, his mainmast coming by the board at the same time, being then about WSW, thirty leagues from Cape Clear. . . The French captain confirms that the ships were the same that took the Elizabeth, he having been on board Mouns^r Dugee the day before.

It is thus quite certain that the Chatham did not turn on the Auguste, and had no hand in her capture. Her log has, unfortunately, not been preserved, neither has

¹ Lediard, p. 775; Charnock, *Biographia Navalis*, vol. iii. p. 39.

that of the Worcester. The logs of the Greenwich and Medway are, however, extant, and have no mention of the capture of the *Auguste*; though it appears that the Medway was engaged with a French ship of war of 60 guns—probably enough the *Jason*—which escaped in the darkness. But our records of this period are almost as defective as our histories are inaccurate; there are no letters from the admiral in command of the fleet; and it is at present quite impossible to say more on this matter than that nothing appears in evidence that can controvert or, indeed, does not support Du Guay-Trouin's narrative.

To follow out the rest of Du Guay-Trouin's life would be almost to write the naval history of France during this period. I will therefore only refer to the action of 21 October, 1707, when he, in company with Forbin, captured or destroyed an English squadron of two 80- and two 50-gun ships; a third, 80 alone, the *Royal Oak*, had the doubtful good fortune to escape.¹ Du Guay's share in this was brilliant, and on his return to France, the king, Louis XIV, conferred on him a pension of 1,000 livres; which, however, he begged might be passed on to his second captain, who was, he represented, a poor man, and had lost a leg in the engagement. Afterwards, being at court, and called on to relate to the king the events of the fight, he is described as having said incidentally, 'J'ordonnai à la Gloire de me suivre;' on which the king interrupted him with 'Et elle vous fut fidèle!'² The

¹ Charnock, *Biog. Nav.*, vol. ii. p. 117.

² The genuineness of this anecdote seems very doubtful. It is not mentioned by Du Guay-Trouin, to whom the royal joke would have been a neat compliment; and it bears a suspicious resemblance to the really historical remark of M. de St. George to Anson after the battle off Cape

Gloire, however, passed over to the English eighteen months later, when she, in company with the *Achille*, commanded by Du Guay in person, and their prize, the *Bristol*, a 50-gun ship, fell into the midst of the Channel fleet. The *Achille*, escaped, not without difficulty; but the *Bristol* was recaptured, and the *Gloire* lowered her flag to the *Chester*, whose captain was that Thomas Mathews who some thirty-five years afterwards, commanded our fleet in the Mediterranean.

Du Guay Trouin's good services were considered as far above the loss of the *Gloire*, and in the following July, 1709, they were formally acknowledged by letters of nobility and the grant of arms, the blazon of which is: Argent, an anchor sable; on a chief azure, two fleur de lys or; with the motto 'Dedit hæc insignia virtus.' The arms which, under the similar circumstances, had been given to Jean Bart were: Argent, on a fess azure, a fleur de lys or; in chief, a saltire sable; in base, a lion passant gules: both thus bearing a distinct reference to the arms of France. Many other noble and valiant deeds did Du Guay-Trouin after this, including the capture of *Rio* in 1712. After the peace he was, in 1715, raised to flag rank as *chef d'escadre*, having, for ten years before, had the actual command of squadrons. He received the higher grade of *lieutenant-général* in 1728, and, older in honour than in years, died on 27 September, 1736.

And now, looking back on the chronicle of the past which I have here faintly outlined, can we wonder that, in France, popular esteem has been lavished on the memory of Du Guay-Trouin? From small beginnings

Finisterre on 3 May (O S), 1747: 'Monsieur,' he said, 'vous avez vaincu l'Invincible, et la Gloire vous suit.'

he forced his way out of the cold shade into the hot sunlight. At a time of great depression, when at La Hogue, at Gibraltar, at Toulon, the French navy had been pretty nigh destroyed, he, almost alone, supported the French cause at sea, and won many signal successes. It matters not that he often won them by means of superior force: the greater, in fact, was his merit, that with very inferior resources he could so often find himself superior at the place of meeting. But the points to which I have more especially wished to call attention are these: that Du Guay-Trouin was not, in the early part of his brilliant career, an officer of the French navy; that he was received into the French navy only when his name was already famous both in France and England; and that, even now, the French navy is not so exclusive but that officers from the merchant service may—though exceptionally—obtain commissions in it. In the English navy it is not so. Whatever laxity there may have been in the seventeenth century, there is none now. In our army, some fifteen commissions are each year given to men from the ranks; but, in our navy as at present organised, promotion whether from the merchants' service, or from before the mast, is utterly impossible; and though this impossibility may have certain advantages, may render our service more self-contained and more homogeneous, the study of careers such as those of Jean Bart and Du Guay-Trouin, on the one hand, of George Walker and Fortunatus Wright on the other, leads me to doubt whether a possibility the other way might not also sometimes have its own advantages, of greater national importance than even strict homogeneity, and strict conformity to regulation pattern.

CHAPTER X.

*THE FRENCH PRIVATEERS.*III. THUROT.¹

THE question of fortifying the several commercial harbours and seaports round our coasts has been often proposed and argued on, and is, in reality, one which too closely affects our material interests to be treated as lightly or carelessly as it often is treated, and which deserves more consideration than it commonly gets. 'Britannia needs no bulwarks' is a favourite reply; a poetical vaunt, a bit of bounce, that sounds well, and that, in 1801, when it was first written, sounded almost better. With the tidings of the First of June, of St. Vincent, Camperdown, and the Nile still ringing in the public ears, we can quite understand the proud boast which a few years' further experience showed thinking men might be a very unsafe one. Had Villeneuve been a man of moderate ability and moderate nerve, Britannia might have wished very heartily for bulwarks; and the martello towers, which were built shortly after, showed that it was even then considered just as well to have some such things along the steep.

It is not, however, of that stirring period of eighteen hundred and war-time, that I am now about to write.

¹ *Fraser's Magazine*, January, 1878.

I am going to endeavour to recall the memory of an older war, and a still earlier scare ; when a French invasion seemed imminent ; when flat-bottomed boats were got ready all along the north coast of France ; when all along the south coast of England soldiers, militia and volunteers, were mustered to oppose the expected landing ; when Garrick wrote, and Boyce composed, and Champness sang that spirit-stirring song, ‘Hearts of Oak,’ which is still the recognised call of our seamen to quarters, though such lines as—

We’ll still make them fear, and still make them flee,
And drub ’em on shore as we’ve drubbed ’em at sea—

hint at a possibility of invasion after all.

But then, as half a century later, the boldness and decision of English admirals, acting on the timidity and vacillation of the French, nullified the well-planned strategy of the French government ; then, on 18 August, 1759, Boscawen—‘Old Dreadnought,’ as our sailors loved to call him—broke up, dispersed, captured, burnt, or drove on shore the Toulon fleet, under M. de la Clue, as it tried to pass out of the Mediterranean to join the fleet at Brest, and obtain the command of the Channel ; then Hawke—as a hawk on his quarry—pounced down on that Brest fleet, as, on 20 November, 1759, it was entering Quiberon Bay, to embark the troops mustered in Morbihan ; and made that brilliant and glorious smash of the French navy which was historically, nautically, and politically, the precursor and rival of Trafalgar ; the memory of which in France is perpetuated as ‘*la journée de M. de Conflans*,’ though in England it is but feebly remembered as Hawke’s action, and to many of us the name of Quiberon Bay now conveys no definite meaning.

But, nevertheless, so far as we were concerned, Quiberon Bay was the decisive battle of the Seven Years' War. Had the result of it been reversed, had it been the English fleet that was annihilated, the relative positions of France and England during the next four years, and in the negotiations which then ensued, would have been extremely different. Historians have not recognised this; and even at the time the victory seems to have been taken very much as a matter of course. The possibility of the result of a meeting between the two fleets being not exactly what it was, seems never to have occurred to our enthusiastic countrymen, who had, less than three years before, shot one of their admirals for strategic defeat and tactical imbecility; not, indeed, for positive cowardice, but, at any rate, for very gross misconduct. Hawke was thanked by Parliament for his great victory, and a pension followed shortly after, but he did not get his peerage for seventeen years. Even at the time, the fleet was so neglected by the government, now that the strain—unacknowledged though it was—was taken off, that the necessary stores and provisions were not sent to it; and our seamen were exposed to great and uncalled-for hardships and privations, while keeping up the strict blockade on the shattered remnants of the enemy's navy. The feeling of the fleet was expressed in some wretched doggerel, which none the less conveys a very painful idea of injustice and neglect:

Ere Hawke did bang
Monsieur Confians,
You sent us beef and beer;
Now Monsieur's beat,
We've nought to eat,
Since you have nought to fear.

All this, however, is matter of history more or less familiar. But coincident with these great events, smaller events were taking place. Coincident with the French idea of a great invasion in the south of England, which was extinguished by Boscawen and Hawke, was entertained by the French another idea, that of a landing in the north of England or Ireland, not indeed in any force, but still in such force and under such circumstances as might, and as it was hoped would, direct to the north a considerable part of the army mustered in the south, would thus weaken the defence, and render the undertaking of the invaders comparatively easy. The charge of this expedition was given to a man whose name indeed, Thurot, is in all our histories, but of whose career no one English book, or French book either, gives any complete or correct account. In the local records, the corporation books of many towns, the mention of Thurot's name shows that he was a much more real personage in the minds of the worthy burghers than De la Clue or Conflans. And yet, even then, he was to some extent mythical, and his earliest biographer, the Rev. John Francis Durand,¹ writing immediately after his death, in 1760, says:—

In the course of a few weeks I have known him to be a Scotchman, an Englishman, and an Hibernian; he was

¹ *Genuine and Curious Memoirs of the famous Captain Thurot, written by the Rev. John Francis Durand, with some of Mons. Thurot's Original Letters to that Gentleman, now in England. To which is added a much more faithful and particular Account than has been hitherto published of his Proceedings since his Sailing from the Coast of France, October 18, 1759. Dublin, 12mo, 1760.* I have said in the text that these Memoirs are curiously inaccurate. Even such a trifling matter as this last-mentioned date is incorrect.

successively the young Pretender, a reformed pirate, and a bastard of the blood royal of France, and I make no doubt that if he had kept the sea a little longer he would, in his turn, have been the brother of the Grand Turk, or the nephew of the Pope of Rome, unless the newspapers had thought fit to give us broad hints that he was those very great personages themselves in disguise.

Durand's little book is the only Life of Thurot which has been written in English; but though the author makes great claim to authenticity, as having been an intimate friend of Thurot for many years, he has left us a farrago of nonsense which we may believe Thurot himself crammed him with. Durand was a clergyman, and is said by Entick, also a clergyman, to be worthy of credit; it is more than can be said of his book, which can only be trusted for the few years when Thurot was living in London, or a frequent visitor to it; or when, in the latter part, it quotes or refers to official papers; but the account which it gives of Thurot's early life and active career is simply and entirely false; it has not even the semblance of truth.

François Thurot,¹ the son of an innkeeper and post-master in a small way of business, was born at Nuits, a petty town of Burgundy (Côte d'Or) on 22 July, 1726. As a boy he is said to have been of a violent and quarrel-

¹ The French notices of Thurot referred to are :

- (1) *Adresse a Messieurs les Représentans de la Nation Française.* Par Mlle. Thurot. 1790.
- (2) *Vie du Capitaine Thurot.* Par M. * * *. Paris, 1791.
- (3) *Journal Historique du Capitaine Thurot dans sa Croisière sur les Côtes d'Ecosse et d'Irlande.* Dunkerque, 1760.
- (4) *Journal de la Navigation d'une Escadre Française, partie du port de Dunkerque aux ordres du capitaine Thurot, le 15 Octobre, 1759,*

some disposition ; and when, after having had a fair education at the Jesuits' College at Dijon, he was, at the age of sixteen, bound apprentice in the shop of a druggist in that town, he launched out into all sorts of juvenile dissipations and debauchery. This, as is often the case, led to the worst kind of rowdyism ; and he ended his career in Dijon by robbing his aunt of her silver dishes and flying from the town. Naturally enough, he ignored Dijon and Nuits for the rest of his life ; he seems to have passed himself off as a native of Boulogne, when, some short time after, he turned up at Dunkirk, and, being almost or quite destitute, obtained employment as a surgeon on board a privateer fitting out to take advantage of the war with England. He was then barely eighteen, and his knowledge of surgery was such as he had picked up during his few months in the druggist's shop ; so that it was, perhaps, in some respects, fortunate for the crew of the privateer that she was captured by the English almost at once ; and that they and their surgeon were put out of harm's way in a prison at Dover.

Thurot remained a prisoner for about a year, during which time he learned English ; and having won the good opinion of his gaolers, and probably being out on parole, he one night seized a small boat, and put to sea with no further equipment than a pair of sculls ; with these, and with his shirt for a sail, he reached Calais in the course of the next day. The success of this bold escape made some noise, and was the means of introducing him to the Maréchal de Belle-Isle, who advised him to study navigation and take to a seafaring life. He did both ; he entered as boy on board a privateer,

and rose rapidly to higher ratings; after two cruises he was entrusted with an independent command, and by his activity, energy, and good fortune, won some reputation and a large share of prize-money; so that, when peace was concluded in 1748, although but twenty-two, and having been only three years at sea, he was in a position to fit out a merchant-ship at his own risk and expense. For the next few years he lived a good deal in London, lodging—according to Mr. Durand—at the house of an apothecary in Paddington, where he passed as a gentleman. He spoke English remarkably well for a foreigner, sang, played the flute and the French horn, was free with his cash, and was, altogether, good company.

‘But,’ says Durand, ‘the chief bent of his inclination leaned towards navigation and fortification; he had always some little plans, purely the efforts of his unformed genius, relative to those arts about him, which he was constantly showing to his companions; and never seemed so thoroughly happy as when he got with people that had a smattering of the above-mentioned sciences. The last time he was in England he lived in a court in Carey Street, Lincoln’s Inn Fields, and was there instructed in the mathematics by one Mr. Donnelly, an Irish gentleman, famous for his knowledge and abilities in mathematical studies.’

He seems, then, to have passed his time in London in an easy, social, sometimes studious, occasionally dissipated manner; vanishing for months together, no one knew where, when his money ran short. Durand clearly knew nothing about him during these absences, beyond what Thurot himself chose to tell; and in that there was evidently a good deal of romance. It is, however, quite certain that he was actively engaged in smuggling;

possibly in piracy also; and that his misdeeds brought him within the grasp of the law, apparently both in England and in France. In 1753, his ship, the *Argonaute* of Dunkirk, of 160 tons, which sailed from Ré for Ostend in March, was in July seized by the custom-house officers of the Baltimore district—a district embracing the south-west extremity of Ireland, and notorious enough as the haunt of smugglers and pirates, for which, as the map will show, it was curiously well adapted. The allegation on behalf of Thurot runs:—

The seizure was made on a charge of illegal practices contrary to the revenues and to the other laws of the country, but no instances are given of these illegal practices, nor is there any other mention of what laws he had broken. Nor could such be cited; for the officer who made the seizure has affirmed on oath, in his deposition, that he seized the ship only because it had, in a former voyage, fraudulently introduced a cargo and had carried wools out of it. It is admitted that in his second voyage he had met with a tempest, and that since his arrival on the coast, where he had been tossed, he had not committed any act contrary to law.¹

If the statement is true, Thurot had been singularly unfortunate in his choice of an anchorage, for there is not a port in the whole district at which a foreign merchant-ship could have any legitimate business. It would appear that this was the opinion of the English government, for the claim for redress was not allowed at the time, and must have been summarily ended by the outbreak of hostilities in the following year. But in 1790 Thurot's daughter reverted to it, and in her ad-

¹ Foreign Office, France, No. 467. *Mémoire touchant le vaisseau l'Argonaute, le 5 juin, 1754.*

dress to the French government, urged her claims for a pension on the grounds that her father had been ruined by legal process in England, on suspicion of being engaged in contraband trade. The suspicion was, apparently, not confined to England, if, as Durand says, he was imprisoned in France, first in Dunkirk and afterwards in Paris, for smuggling; the French laws, in respect to that offence, being extremely severe. It is quite possible that Thurot's peculiar views of commerce and navigation were objected to on both sides of the Channel; and Durand's account is consistent, and pretends to be based on actual knowledge.

Nevertheless, smuggler or pirate, he had in France a reputation as a bold seaman; and when war was on the point of breaking out, his name was mentioned at court as that of a man likely to prove serviceable. The king sent him a commission in the royal navy, and his old patron, the Maréchal de Belle-Isle, procured for him the command of the *Friponne*, a small sloop, in which he cruised, as before, in the Channel, waging a profitable war against English commerce.

Whilst thus employed, he is said to have conceived the possibility of setting fire to Portsmouth and utterly destroying the dockyard. His plan was simplicity itself. He was, it is stated, to glide (*glisser*) into the harbour in the dead of night, in a large boat carrying fifty men. His biographer, M. * * *, thinks that nothing prevented his doing this but the jealousy of the aristocratic courtiers, and the carelessness of the minister who discussed the project in presence of some traitor, who sold the secret to the English government. Had it not been for that, it was only 'necessary to elude the most active

vigilance, and to face the guard of a harbour the entrance of which bristled with cannon.' These, to Thurot, would have been trifles; but the English, being forewarned, took such additional precautions as rendered the brilliant scheme quite hopeless.

It is difficult to say how much, or how little, truth there is in this, but I see no reason to doubt that a wild and daring adventurer, like Thurot, may have proposed some such scheme; partly, perhaps, with a real intention of attempting it; partly also, with a view of being prevented by the government, and of adding to his reputation at a cheap rate. But certainly, if the project was seriously proposed, the French government refused to entertain it; instead of doing so, it appointed Thurot to the command of a squadron to cruise in the Channel.

This squadron, consisting of two 36-gun frigates, the *Marechal de Belle-Isle* and the *Chauvelin*, each mounting twenty-eight twelve-pounders on her maindeck, and two small sloops, sailed from St. Malo on 16 July, 1757. Very shortly after starting, one of the sloops, looking out ahead, was picked up by some English cruisers; but the others escaped. On the early morning of 25 July, off Portland, they fell in with the English frigate *Southampton* (32 guns, Captain Gilchrist¹), on her way from Portsmouth to Plymouth, with stores and specie. As the action that ensued is one which the French biographer considers especially glorious, it is well to point out that the French frigates were each of them more than a nominal match for the *Southampton*; that the two together had a very great superiority of force, independently of three small

¹ The maternal grandfather of Admiral the Earl of Dundonald. *Autobiography of a Seaman*, i. 34.

ft in company, which took no part in the engagement; at they attacked and were beaten off; and that whether they were silenced and dropped astern, as Gilchrist¹ related, or were simply unable to follow and prevent the Southampton making off, as M. * * * says, is a matter of little consequence. The main point is the same; that Thurot, with two frigates against one, each larger, swifter, and with a more numerous crew, did not capture one; and with the best will in the world, it is difficult to see the great glory which, from this non-capture, accrues to the French navy.

A comparative statement of the force of the combatants will put this in a clearer light:

Southampton	26 12-pounders	6 6-pounders	220 men.
Belle Isle	28 12-pounders	8 6-pounders	400 men.
Chauvelin	28 ,,	8 ,,	400 ,,
Total	56 12-pounders	16 6-pounders	800 men.

It looks to me, indeed, as if M. Thurot had conceived special work to be plundering comparatively helpless merchant-ships, rather than fighting sturdily defended men-of-war; and that, when he found the Southampton easy capture, he stomached his loss—amounting, on board the Belle-Isle alone, to 14 killed, 26 wounded—hauléd to the wind. Clearly it was no part of Captain Gilchrist's duty, when he was specially employed in trying specie, to go out of his way to engage an enemy more than double his strength. That this is the correct view to take of Thurot's conduct seems confirmed by the facts of another action which he fought off Flush-

¹ Captain's Letters, G. No. 12, 26 July, 1757. Beatson's account (*and Mal' Memoirs* v. 86) is a pretty close copy of Gilchrist's letter.

ing, on 1 August, with the Seahorse (Captain Taylor), a 24-gun frigate, carrying twenty-two 9-pounders, two 3-pounders, and 160 men. The Belle-Isle, which, in her engagement with the Southampton, had suffered much in her rigging, had been partially dismantled in a squall off Ostend, and was in tow of the Chauvelin, their sloop, the Gros Thomas, in company, when the Seahorse, with two small craft, the Raven and Bonetta, bore down against them. After an engagement lasting three hours and a half, at first with the Chauvelin alone, and afterwards with the two together, the Seahorse was almost dismantled and had 8 men killed, 17 badly wounded. She was of much smaller force than either the Belle-Isle or the Chauvelin, and ought to have been captured. That she was not, was due not so much to her material strength, as to the moral weakness of her opponents, who have boasted—as of a victory—of having forced her to sheer off. In point of fact, she was too much disabled either to sheer off or to continue the attack, and the French frigates were content to leave her and retire into Flushing.

It was 18 September before they were refitted and put to sea. According to the story told by the French chroniclers, they were scarcely well out of the port before they were chased in again by an English squadron, consisting of three ships of the line and two frigates. The Chauvelin got back without difficulty; but the Belle-Isle, carrying away her foretopsail-yard, was overtaken, and sustained a heavy fire before she could escape. It is difficult to say that any story, plausibly told, is absolutely and entirely false; but if this is not so, it is certainly much exaggerated. The York, the only line-of-battle ship or

the coast at the time was anchored off Gravelines from the 13th to the 21st, and did not see the ships in the interval. This, it might be said, is only negative evidence; what is very positive evidence is that Vice-Admiral Smith—Tom of Ten Thousand—the commander-in-chief in the Downs, writing to the admiralty on Tuesday, 20 September, said:

‘Yesterday Mr. Berkley came in a cutter from Flushing and acquaints me the two French frigates sailed from thence on Sunday morning, with two Ostend and two Dunkirk pilots on board: that they steered towards Ostend, but shortly hauled their wind, as he supposed to chase him, when he observed the large ship carry away her topmast, and he seems certain the head of her mainmast was likewise gone. They both immediately returned to Flushing and anchored within the buoys.’

It is, of course, quite possible that the Frenchmen did get a distant view of some ships which Mr. Berkley did not see; that they believed them to be English ships of the line, and that they hauled their wind to avoid them. But the heavy fire—the several broadsides poured into the Belle-Isle within pistol shot—must be admitted to be pure imagination.

When Thurot had again refitted, the two ships, Belle-Isle and Chauvelin, stood out to the northward, and cruised with some success on the east coast of England and Scotland. On 5 October they were driven by stress of weather into the Moray Frith, and anchored off Banff, to the no small dismay of the provost and burgesses, who expected nothing less than the enforcement of a heavy contribution. The accident of opportunity might have suggested this to Thurot, and there was no force to

prevent him ; but during the night the gale freshened ; the Chauvelin parted her cables and drifted out to sea, leaving her anchors behind ; and in the morning the Belle-Isle weighed, and went to look for her, very much to the relief of the townspeople of Banff, who, for once, realised the danger to which they were exposed so far as to raise a sum of 400*l.* to construct a battery for their future defence.¹

The two ships did not meet outside, and we may conclude that the Chauvelin made the best of her way back to France : the Belle-Isle, on the other hand, kept northwards ; and having, under the Dutch flag, obtained some provisions at the Shetland Islands, crossed over to Bergen, picking up on her way (19 October) a prize, described as a royal frigate of 26 guns : this it certainly was not ; but it may have been an armed merchant-ship, or possibly a privateer. During this year the French cruisers were very active, and took—according to Beatson²—571 British ships, most of which, however, were of trifling value. The number of prizes taken by us amounted to no more than 364 ; but of these, ‘ 115 were either privateers of force or armed merchant ships, carrying a great number of guns, and manned with upwards of 10,000 seamen ; ’ so that, on the whole, the balance was believed to be in our favour.

Thurot anchored at Bergen on 30 October, and remained there a couple of months, refitting his ship, which, though only a month at sea, was much in want

¹ The *Statistical Account of Scotland* (vol. xiii. p. 20) gives a ludicrous description of the meeting of the corporation of Banff ; the date there given (1759) is, however, a mistake. Thurot was not near Banff in 1759.

² *Naval and Military Memoirs*, ii. 90.

of it. Here a curious incident occurred, which marks the character of the man : he was short of naval stores such as blocks, ropes, and spars ; and offered to buy them from the captain of a French ship, in the port, consigned to a Norwegian merchant. The captain refused to sell ; and Thurot, not to be balked, or, as his biographer puts it, ' guided by his zeal for the interests of his country,' sent a party on board, and with the strong hand seized on what he wanted ; ' an act of violence,' adds M. * * *, ' which would, under other circumstances, have been most blamable,' and which, as it was, nearly got him into trouble with the Norwegian authorities.

He left Bergen on 25 December, and was no sooner outside than he got into a furious storm, which again dismasted the Belle-Isle, whose ill-luck in that respect suggests that Thurot was not quite such a good practical seaman as he is represented. Under jury-masts, and with continual bad weather, the Belle-Isle was driven north beyond the 65th parallel ; it was slowly, and with much difficulty, that she worked her way south again, and did not reach Gothenburg till 1 February, 1758.

At Gothenburg Thurot remained till 12 May, and then, going south, capturing several coasters and colliers, he was, on the morning of the 26th, off the entrance to the Firth of Forth. There he met and engaged the Dolphin of 24, and the Solebay of 28 guns. The two English frigates, caught a mile apart, were very roughly handled ; but Thurot, who apparently mistook them, in the first instance, for merchant ships, was quite satisfied with having secured his own safety, and made no attempt to push his advantage to the point of victory. The

match between the two sides was tolerably equal, though the Belle-Isle had a certain superiority both in weight of metal and in number of men; and, in boarding, might perhaps have carried one before the other could assist her; but she had lost 19 killed, 34 wounded, and simple hard fighting was not the vocation of her crew.

Thurot, however, remained in Scotch waters, and made many prizes between S. Abb's Head and the Naze of Norway; his continued presence deeply impressed the coast population; his engagement with the Dolphin and Solebay was magnified by vulgar report, and he became the bugbear of a people who were unaccustomed to the neighbourhood of enemies' ships. Twelve vessels, mostly small snows, brigs, or brigantines, are *named* as prizes taken between 26 May and 12 July; and on the 13th, off the Skaw, he encountered a fleet of merchant ships—seventeen armed pinks—presumably the Baltic trade. With these he had a brisk engagement; they mounted an aggregate of 130 guns, and clustering round the Belle-Isle, seemed for a time as if they might take her; in the end, Thurot broke through them, put them to flight, and cut off one of their number, the George and Joseph: heavy rain and a dark night permitted the rest to escape.

The English government, wearied with the continual complaints about one frigate being left to threaten the coasts of England and Scotland, and almost to stop the North Sea trade, sent several ships to look after the Belle-Isle; but though constantly chased, Thurot succeeded in eluding his pursuers, in maintaining his ground, and in making several captures, till towards the middle of August; when, finding the station too hot for him, he

stretched across to the Faroe Islands. Having obtained some fresh provisions, he came back; and as the ship was making a good deal of water, put into Lough Swilly.

It gives a curious idea of the conditions of naval war in the year 1758, to read of an enemy's frigate quietly taking up her position in Lough Swilly to refit; but even then it was not safe to stay long. Thurot resumed his cruise, and off the west coast of Scotland and northern entrance to St. George's Channel, took several prizes; amongst which are named the *Henry*, mounting 18 guns; the *Charleston*, of 12 guns, laden with cloth stuffs, from Liverpool to Carolina; the *Britannia*, of 14 guns, with porcelain, to New York; and the *Admiral Ruyter* of 18 guns, laden with sugar, coffee, and indigo; but, formidable as the armament of these sounds, it must be borne in mind that the guns of a merchant-ship were small, meant merely to repel any desultory attack of petty pirates, and were useless against a regularly armed ship; not one of these prizes seems to have even attempted any resistance.

By 13 September Thurot was back at Bergen, and cruising from there, again took several prizes; but towards the end of the year he ran down to Ostend, and early in January discharged his crew and officers, or, as we should say, paid off, at Dunkirk.

M. Thurot seems now to have spent some time at Paris, and to have been consulted freely by the government as to the projected invasion of England. The public feeling of France—so far as France had a public feeling—was no doubt just then very bitter against England.

Not only was England at war, and a natural enemy, but four times within the last two years had she defiled the soil of France; and though on the first occasion, the attempt on Rochefort, in September 1757, was altogether abortive; and on the last, the troops which landed near St. Malo, on 3 September, 1758, were, to the number of 800, killed, made prisoners, or driven into the sea at St. Cas, on the 11th; the success on the two other occasions had been sufficient to kindle not only material fires at the time, as at St. Malo in June 1758, but also very much and noisy indignation. The attack on Cherbourg in August 1758, was worst of all; and even St. Cas following directly afterwards could not wipe away the memory of it.

Cherbourg, though very different from what it now is, had been a pet fancy of Louis XV and of Cardinal Fleury: there is no doubt that it was meant, from the beginning, as a standing menace to England: as such its docks had been dug out and fortified against wind and waves and English arms; and as such it was broken up and destroyed by the expedition under Commodore Howe, — ‘Black Dick’ as he was more familiarly called: the mole and fortifications were turned over into the harbour and basins: the work of years was undone in a few days: it seemed almost in mockery that the gate of the grand sluice bore the inscription:

Hanc jussit Lodovix, suasit Floræus, et undis
Curavit mediis Asfeldus surgere molem :
Non aliis votis almæ præsentior urbis.
Ars frænavit aquas, fluctus domuitque minaces :
Hinc tutela viget, stat copia, gloria crescit ;
Hinc Rex, hinc sapiens, herosque manebit in ævum.—

which was, not unaptly under the circumstances, paraphrased by one of the English officers :

Louis and Fleury must, with Asfeld, now
Resign to George, to Pitt, to Bligh and Howe.
One blast destroyed the labour of an age,
Let loose the tides and bid the billows rage ;
Their wealth and safety gone, their glory lost,
The king's, the statesman's, and the hero's boast.

The wrath of France and of the French government was extreme, and it was not lessened by Rear-Admiral Rodney bombarding Havre-de-Grace, on the 3rd and following days of July, 1759, as he wrote in his official letter, 'for fifty-two hours without intermission, with such success that the town was several times in flames, and their magazines of stores for the flat-bottomed boats burnt with great fury, for upwards of six hours.' Albion was to be crushed ; Carthage was to be destroyed ; and whilst the Marquis de Conflans and the Duke d'Aiguillon arranged this in the south, Thurot undertook, with a small force, to make a diversion in the north, according as circumstances rendered expedient.

The force put at his disposal for this purpose consisted of his old ship, the *Maréchal de Belle-Isle*, now mounting 44 guns, of which four were 18-pounders, carried, it would seem, in extra ports on the lower deck ; three smaller frigates, and two corvettes ; and all of these, in addition to their complements, which were smaller than was usual in French ships, carried a number of soldiers, amounting in the aggregate to about 1,200 : these were borne for service on shore, under the command of a brigadier-general, M. de Flobert.

In more exact detail, the squadron was as follows :—

Maréchal de Belle-Isle	44 guns	.	600 men
Bégon	.	.	36 „ . 600 „
Blonde	.	.	36 „ . 400 „
Terpsichore	.	.	24 „ . 300 „
Amarante	.	.	18 „ . ? 150 „
Faucon	.	.	18 „ . ? 150 „

With this force, nominally most respectable, Thurot weighed from Dunkirk on 15 October, 1759. On the 26th he arrived at Gothenburg, having not only passed through the English cruisers which, under Commodore Boys and Sir Peirce Brett, blockaded the coast off Dunkirk and Ostend, but taken several prizes on the way.

A quaint letter, which Durand has preserved, gives the impressions of a Liverpool skipper, a Captain Rimmer, who had seen the squadron at Gothenburg. The Belle-Isle, he says, ‘has a black lion-head, and appears very ill-hogged in the midships, and is painted black and red;’ one of the other frigates ‘has a yellow lion-head standing remarkably high, is painted yellow and black;’ and so on through the rest of them. The fashion which prevailed to the last, of painting ships of the line and frigates black with white stripes, and which was, I believe, definitely introduced by Sir John Jervis when in command of the Mediterranean fleet, no doubt had some advantages; but the artistic eye, comparing it with the fashions of the past, as exemplified in some of the models at Greenwich, in the museum of the Royal Naval College, may almost regret the uniform simplicity which superseded them.

But a more remarkable passage in the letter just

referred to, is that which speaks of the condition of the squadron :—

The frigates when they came into Gothenburg were very foul, as if come off from a long voyage, and were destitute of many necessaries—had very few seamen on board, but full of land forces, commanded by a major-general; most of the soldiers were in blue, faced with white, and others all white. Whilst they remained at Gothenburg, nineteen days, they were fully employed cleaning their ships, getting new top-masts, new rigging for their vessels, victualling and watering; and the Swedes assisted them all in their power, sending them their East Indian ships' boats to water with, and procuring them cables in lieu of those they had ordered to be made, which would have detained them before finished.

And this after eleven days at sea from their first leaving France !

The squadron left Gothenburg on 15 November, and meeting with a succession of southerly gales, was driven northward, and put into Bergen; the *Bégon*, of 36 guns, presumably the 'yellow and black' frigate mentioned by Captain Rummer, and one of the corvettes had parted company; and as Bergen had been given out as a rendezvous, Thurot waited there for several days; they did not, however, appear, and he left without them on 5 December.

The weather, that winter, seems to have been exceptionally and persistently bad, and the squadron, now reduced to four ships, was driven away to the westward, and on 28 December came to an anchor in Westmanna-haven in Stromsoe, one of the Faroe Islands. Whilst there Thurot wished to procure fresh provisions for his ships' companies; and as the governor made difficulties, he landed a party of men, at once to intimidate the

authorities, and to lay hands on whatever they could get. The display of force was sufficient, and a small supply of bullocks, flour, brandy, and tobacco was sent on board. It may be noticed that at that time the Faroe Islands were a favourite haunt of smugglers, and a place of call for Danish and Dutch East Indiamen; now that smuggling, as well as these branches of the East India trade, has been done away, the resources of the islands have probably much diminished, and any supplies they could furnish would scarcely be worth the notice of a body of more than 1,200 men.

During the stay of the squadron at Stromsøe a quarrel broke out between M. de Flobert and Thurot, which was the cause of serious embarrassment both then and afterwards. Flobert had displayed all along a feeling of jealousy at being subordinated to Thurot, as well as of pique at Thurot's refusal to communicate the tenor of his private instructions and the full purport of the expedition. A circumstance, trivial in itself, was sufficient to set the match to the ready fuel. Thurot had learned that one of the soldier-officers had been grumbling about the hardships of the cruise, and the provisions, in what he rightly considered an unofficer-like way; and had felt it his duty to reprimand him sharply. Flobert took up the matter in support of his junior; worked himself into a rage, and, mad with passion, ordered up a corporal and two file of the guard to put Thurot under arrest. This obliged Thurot to produce an order from the king, in proof that he was absolutely commander-in-chief of the expedition; and Flobert—I quote here from the 'Life,' by M. * * *—

‘fearing to compromise his authority by persisting in his imprudent step, drew back, and the quarrel was for the time appeased; leaving, however, a leaven of animosity which continued to ferment, occasioned many difficulties, and threw into the minds of the soldiers a germ of insubordination which produced very bad effects.’

In point of fact this quarrel between Flobert and Thurot was an extreme instance of a cause which, in the last century, and in England more than in France, rendered futile so very many expeditions in which sea and land forces were required to act in conjunction. Of these Vernon’s failure at Cartagena in 1741 was perhaps the most marked and the most disastrous; but there were scores of others; and the constant recurrence of difficulties seems to point to a radically false system and an honest misunderstanding, rather than to mere capitiousness and personal dislike. At the same time, it is too true that there was, between soldiers and sailors, a very mutual feeling of jealousy and contempt, which the officers in no small degree shared with their men. This was strong enough, no doubt, on the part of the soldiers, but was perhaps even stronger amongst the sailors, who saw their favoured and courtly rivals sea-sick and helpless on board ship, but had no opportunity of seeing them in their own sphere of duty and distinction. The pipe-clay, the powdered head, the stiff clothing and etiquette of the soldier were all repulsive to the ‘tar’ of the olden time. Had he been versed in Shakespeare, he would probably have described the object of his scorn in the words of Hotspur, as ‘neat and finely dressed—fresh as a bridegroom—perfumed like a milliner;’ as it was, he drew up a table of precedence, which continued in

vogue till not very many years ago. I have myself heard it said, and meant too, 'A messmate before a shipmate; a shipmate before a stranger; a stranger before a dog; but—a dog before a soldier.'

When we remember the numerous instances to be found in our own annals in which joint expeditions failed from disagreement or want of perfect concord between two commanding officers of the different services, not otherwise connected, it is not to be wondered at if a French soldier of good family, M. *de* Flobert, was indignant at the circumstances that compelled him to act subordinately—or rather insubordinately—to a sailor, not even a genuine naval officer, an ex-smuggler, a privateer, a man of no family, a *roturier*, a François Thurot. Possibly, nay probably, Thurot was at fault in some of the conventionalities of French society, for he had never had any opportunity of seeing or practising them: but, after all, Thurot's name lives in history; Flobert's probably comes before many readers now for the first time.

The constant succession of gales which obliged Thurot to remain at the Faroe Islands, compelled him to put the men on short allowance of bread, ten ounces per day, and to stop the double rations issued to officers and servants, promising, however, that they should be paid savings, that is, the equivalent in money. Flobert insisted that a council of war should be called, and stated that, in his opinion, as their force had been lessened by the loss of the two ships, Bégon and Faucon, and was now weakened by the want of provisions, it was imperative on him to return to France at once. Thurot replied: the speech, as reported, is most likely apocryphal,

but it has been accepted by the French, and serves at any rate to illustrate the sense in which they have considered his character. He said, then :—

That as they could not get provisions at the Faroe Islands, they must go and look for them in England, where they would find abundance. That the winds, which had long been contrary, would change, and three days would bring them to their destination · the only honourable way to be useful to their country was to make a diversion—which might lead to great results—by attacking the enemy in their homes, and by braving all risks in this glorious attempt ; certainly not by returning shamefully to France after so much toil and fatigue, without having ventured to undertake anything. For the rest, the direct route lay past England, and on the English coast he would land ; it was absolutely necessary to make a descent ; he was determined to do so ; the reasons offered for a retreat so dishonourable as had been proposed could have no influence with a force on which the safety of the country depended ; and, in fine, that to grumble at the difficulties, or even the calamities incidental to war, was not showing the courage and firmness necessary to the career of arms.

Thurot carried his point. On 26 January, 1760, the squadron left Stromsoe, with a fresh wind from north-west, and by the 30th was on the north coast of Ireland. It was his intention to enter Lough Foyle, and attack Londonderry ; there does not seem to have been anything to prevent him, except the weather, which, with a southerly gale, drove him off the coast. And meanwhile, a mutiny broke out amongst the officers of the troops, which was the more dangerous as the soldiers formed the largest part of the ships' companies. The Amarante deserted the squadron ; the Terpsichore had arranged to do the same ; Thurot hailed to say that if the wind did

not shift he would run back to Bergen and get provisions ; the Blonde replied that it was none too soon. M. de Rusilly, commanding the troops on board the *Terpsichore*, complained bitterly of the short allowance of provisions, and said that all the officers were decided to return to France. Thurot pointed out that their doing so might lead to results disagreeable to themselves ; but finding his authority set at naught, he consented, as a compromise, to go to Bergen.

The wind, however, now changed to the north-west, and he proposed to enter St. George's Channel ; but Rusilly impudently notified to him, in the name of the officers of the *Terpsichore*, that they were going to pass to the west of Ireland, and return to France. Thurot ordered Dernaudais, the captain of the *Terpsichore*, to follow the *Belle-Isle*, saying that if he refused he should be responsible before the king for his conduct. Rusilly answered that he would take all the responsibility on himself ; that it was his intention, as soon as he arrived in France, to lay a complaint of Thurot's conduct before the court, and have him punished. Dernaudais, who had every wish to obey his commodore, was forced by Rusilly and the other soldier-officers to yield, and to make off towards the west ; Thurot fired a shot across the *Terpsichore's* bows ; he had to fire a second before she would bring to ; and Dernaudais, having gone on board the *Belle-Isle*, had to prove that he had been constrained by his officers. He was sent back to his ship, bearing to the mutineers the assurance that they should be severely punished. The Blonde seems to have been just at that time more favourably disposed ; she passed under the *Belle-Isle's* stern, and her captain,

M. Larréguy, hailed that Thurot might count on him.

The next day Thurot judged it necessary to reduce the ration of bread to eight ounces. Flobert ordered that only five ounces should be issued to the soldiers. These naturally complained that they got less than the sailors, and Thurot at once gave directions that they should get the same. Flobert, whose order seems to have been quite unwarranted—to have been given only to provoke disturbance amongst his men—was furious. He insisted on a council, and demanded that the captain should explain his navigation, for the day before it had been agreed that he was to enter St. George's Channel, and now he was standing towards Londonderry. Thurot replied that, in fact, he meant to go to Londonderry. Flobert asked what he would do if the wind still prevented his entering. In that case Thurot would continue his route. 'Well then!' cried Flobert, 'if to-morrow morning, at six o'clock, we are not in the port of Londonderry, and you do not then give up this project, I will have you arrested, and will myself take charge of the ship.' Thurot is described as being more surprised than angry, and as contenting himself with saying, 'If you take it in that way there's nothing more to be said; your threats do not intimidate me; I do not fear you, and I defy you to arrest me.'

Flobert, screaming with rage, rushed out of the cabin, ordered the sentry to prevent Thurot leaving it, and called the guard to arms. Thurot took his pistols, pushed past the sentry, and went out on the quarter-deck. The guard had fallen in, but the men were unwilling to execute off-hand the orders of their command-

ant, whose fellows had, meantime, pointed out to him that he was exceeding his power. Flobert gave way, and Thurot, to put an end to the scandalous scene, and to prevent anything of the sort happening again, wished to read out his instructions from the king, and the commission appointing him commander-in-chief of the squadron. Flobert forbade the soldiers to listen to him. Thurot then said that he would have it posted up for all to read. Flobert gave orders that whoever attempted to post it up should be arrested. It was now Thurot's turn to give way; 'he had the complaisance not to make his instructions public'—not to post them up—and so calm was restored.

That same night the Belle-Isle hove to off the entrance to Lough Foyle, and in the darkness her two consorts left her, having agreed between themselves to pass round to the west of Ireland. By a mistake in their reckoning, however, they rejoined her next day, but too late to carry out the commodore's purpose. The wind had shifted to the south-west, and it was no longer possible to enter the Lough.

Meanwhile, in gales, disturbances, and quarrels, time slipped away. It was 15 February; the daily allowance of bread was reduced to five ounces, and Thurot, firmly resolved not to go back to France, anchored in Claiгеann Bay in the island of Islay. Here he learned from a man, McDonald, who came off as pilot, of the decisive defeat which Conflans had sustained. It was an event three months past, but was news to him, and disturbed his plans, as he saw that, of course, the great project of invasion could not be carried out. He was, however, still unwilling to return without attempting something

which might be for the honour, if not very much for the material advantage of France. But it was absolutely necessary, in the first place, to get some fresh provisions and bread, for his crews were sickly; and, as the population of the island, with the repressive measures of the English Government after 'the Forty-five' still in their memories, refused to furnish any supplies, the natural course would have been to take them by force. This Thurot was unwilling to do; for his instructions were positive not to attempt any hostile landing in Scotland, where it was hoped the Jacobite feeling might itself make a diversion in favour of French arms.

In this dilemma he came to an arrangement with McDonald—who seems to have acted throughout as his agent—to land his men as a demonstration. It was the merest of demonstrations. The poor, half-starved, scurvy-smitten wretches were no sooner landed than they 'began to dig up every green thing they saw upon the ground, even the grass, which they devoured with the utmost eagerness.' The bullocks, nevertheless, were produced; forty-eight were driven in, and after a difficulty with Flobert, who wished to 'requisition' them, were very honestly paid for by Thurot. In a similar way, he got a small but grateful supply of oatmeal and flour; and putting to sea on the 19th, a Lisbon trader, laden with oranges, was, under the circumstances, a most valuable prize.

About midnight on the 20th he entered Belfast Lough. On the previous evening he had detailed his plans to Flobert.

'There are two objects before us,' he had said, 'Belfast and Carrickfergus. I will land you at Whitehouse. You will,

in the first instance, attack Belfast; it is a rich commercial town, and has neither fortifications nor troops. Threaten to set fire to it, and the inhabitants will hasten to furnish the stores and provisions of which we are so much in need. You will be able, besides, to levy a large contribution. After that you will go to Carrickfergus, a town of but small size, and poor. It will be quite easy to seize on the castle, which is old, ruinous, and without defence. You will set at liberty the French prisoners who are there, and extract from the people such a contribution of provisions and money as their small means will permit; and will re-embark before the English ships are apprised of our landing. The whole thing is to be done off-hand; the enemy must not have time to organise any opposition.'

The plan seems to have been excellent, but Flobert, either out of contradiction, or a pedantic adherence to prescribed rules, insisted on attacking Carrickfergus first. He would land at Kilroot, two or three miles to the north-east of Carrickfergus, or nowhere; and unable to overcome his mutinous obstinacy, Thurot, sooner than do nothing, consented. The landing of about 600 men was effected by noon on 21 February, 1760.

As soon as Lieut.-Col. Jennings, who commanded at Carrickfergus, learned that three strange and suspicious ships had anchored at Kilroot, whilst waiting for further information, he sent all the prisoners to Belfast, and made what preparations he could for defence: These were but few. Although Carrickfergus was, in a way, the military dépôt of the north of Ireland, the castle was ruinous, the town was unfortified, and there were in garrison only 200 men, almost all young recruits, and, as yet, quite undisciplined. Accordingly, when Flobert attacked, little opposition could be made; the men retired

into the castle, and after a short stand, in which some 50 French were killed and wounded, they capitulated on terms sufficiently favourable. The troops were not to be sent prisoners to France, but exchanged against an equal number of French; the castle (such as it was) was not to be demolished; the town was not to be burnt or pillaged, but was, as a ransom, to supply the squadron with provisions. The course of events rendered these conditions practically vain; and though the town was not set on fire, it was pretty well ransacked, as was, indeed, to be expected from men whose officers had set them no good example of obedience, and who had been confined on board ship for four months.

Thurot had meanwhile weighed, stood further into the bay, and anchored off Whitehouse. From there, on the next day, he landed, and in an interview with Flobert, pressed him to advance at once on Belfast, which, he understood, was defended by only 200 regulars and some militia. Flobert, notwithstanding this and the wish of his own officers, refused to move.

The next day, the 23rd, Thurot wrote to Flobert, still urging him to attack Belfast; again pointing out that they could get plenty of provisions there, could levy a rich contribution, and that it would be easier to re-embark. That he could not stay long, as the enemy would gather in on him; that, in fact, he must sail next day; and that, unless he got provisions, he would not re-embark the troops: it would be better that they should remain prisoners in Ireland than die of hunger on board. Flobert's reply to his commanding officer is a valuable commentary on the discipline of the period.

If, he wrote, you had done with your ships the hundredth part of what I have done with the quarter of my detachment, we should not be in the wretched plight in which, by your fault alone, we now are; for this you shall answer to the king, who, when he entrusted you with the conduct of a detachment, did not give you permission to sacrifice it, in a barefaced manner, in trying to carry out impossible and chimerical plans. If you had had the common sense to see that famine is the only evil without remedy and beyond the courage of the king's troops, you would not now be reduced to the cruel threat of abandoning us to the discretion of the king's enemies. It is your duty to abide whatever may happen, rather than not re-embark the detachment. I summon you, in the king's name, to run all hazards rather than abandon us.

M. de Cavenac, who, on Flobert being wounded, had taken the command, wrote in much the same sense; and again, shortly afterwards, that the enemy were mustering in force, and that it was necessary to re-embark at once. Thurot, in threatening to abandon the troops, had undoubtedly threatened what he could not and durst not perform; and finding that their officers would not lead them against Belfast, he embarked them on the evening of the 25th. Of provisions he seems to have obtained none, except a few potatoes. The mayor and three townsmen had been taken on board as security for the promised supplies; but as these were not forthcoming on the 24th, it was arranged that the town should pay 1,000*l.* instead; and two of the hostages were sent on shore to see about it; the two others, Mr. Chaplin, the mayor, and Mr. Spaight, a merchant of Carrickfergus, being kept on board. Thurot was anxious to get out of the bay, but a stormy wind from

the northward prevented him, and he could not weigh till midnight of the 27th. It was half-past four on the morning of the 28th when he rounded the light on the island of Copeland.

The delay which had been enforced on him had permitted the government to bring up a small squadron from the south of Ireland. It cannot but appear strange that there should have been at that time no ships of war in the northern waters; for it had been known for weeks past that Thurot was on the coast, and great alarm had been felt at all places which were, or thought they were, worth attacking. At Whitehaven, where some 200 merchant ships, coasting vessels and others, were lying, there was great excitement, and 600 volunteers took up arms to defend the place; but how these were to defend the shipping does not appear. Liverpool in the same way, then rising fast into importance, and especially obnoxious for the number of its privateers, assembled a considerable number of troops, mostly of the local militia. An old townsman, who, under the name of a 'nonagenarian,' published his recollections a few years ago, has described the scene, which would be still fresh in the memory of his mother when he was a little boy:—

'Everton Hill,' he says, 'was alive with people from the town waiting the freebooters' approach. A party of soldiers was then encamped on the hill, and I have been told that the men had orders, on Thurot's appearance, to make signals if by day, and to light up the beacon if at night, to communicate the intelligence of the French fleet being off the coast to the other beacons at Ashurst and Billinge, Rivington Pike, and elsewhere, and so spread the news into the north; while

signals would also be taken up at Halton, Beeston, the Wrekin, and thence to the southward.' ¹

But there seems to have been no attempt to defend the river, and Thurot might, practically without opposition, have done a good deal of mischief amongst the shipping, and have destroyed the rising fortunes of the Bolds, the Colquitts, and others whose names are perpetuated in the modern streets.

Notwithstanding all this preparation and excitement, no ships had been sent north; and when the Duke of Bedford, then Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, had news of the landing at Carrickfergus, he had to send, quite promiscuously, to the different seaports, to inform the captains of any of his Majesty's ships that might happen to be there, of the enemy being on the coast. Luckily, and only luckily, there did happen to be three frigates at Kinsale: the *Æolus*, of 32 guns, Captain Elliot, *Brilliant* and *Pallas*, each of 36 guns. They belonged to Hawke's fleet on the coast of France, had been blown off their station, had run short of provisions, had put into Kinsale, and had been detained by a succession of southerly gales. Their presence at Kinsale when the Lord-Lieutenant's letter arrived on 24 February, was the result of a very curious succession of accidents. On receipt of the news they had got to sea with all haste, and had come off the entrance of Belfast Lough on the evening of the 26th, but during the gale had not ventured inside. It was thus that, on the morning of the 28th, when the French squadron came round Copeland Island,

¹ *Recollections of Old Liverpool*, by a Nonagenarian (Liverpool, 1863), p. 146.

it saw, and was immediately seen by, the *Æolus* and her consorts.

It was no part of Thurot's plan to fight a squadron of English frigates, and he did not wait for their attack. They gave chase, and closed with him about nine o'clock; the *Æolus*, leading, engaged the *Belle-Isle*; the *Pallas* and *Brilliant*, as they came up, assisted her; and after a smart action, lasting for about an hour and a half, Thurot was killed, and his ship hauled down her colours. The *Blonde* and *Terpsichore* had not shown any wish to fight, and being chased by the *Pallas* and *Brilliant*, struck almost at once; they thus sustained little or no damage or loss; but the *Belle-Isle* had suffered considerably in men, in spars, and in hull. Captain Elliot, in his official letter, estimates the enemy's loss, in killed and wounded, at 300; the French accounts—probably not including the less severe cases—speak of 90 *hors de combat*; and, whichever account we accept, the loss was very great, and had fallen almost entirely on the *Belle-Isle*, which was also with difficulty kept from sinking, as she was taken, with the other prizes, into Ramsay Bay, in the Isle of Mann.¹

The presence of the French frigates on the coast had caused such vivid alarm, that the rejoicing over their capture was somewhat excessive, and was accompanied by much boasting. The action was no doubt highly creditable to Elliot and his companions, and a very important service was performed just when it was most needed;

¹ M de Flobert had been left at Carrickfergus, wounded, and thus fell into the hands of Lord Charlemont, who seems to have been favourably impressed by his manners and kindly disposition, though he speaks also of his pedantic notions of military science and discipline. See Haidey's *Memoirs of the Earl of Charlemont*, i. 110 et seq.

but there was not in reality much to boast about; and I cannot but think that Nelson was prompted by an imperfect knowledge of the facts when he wrote on 11 January 1804:¹ 'his [Elliot's] action with Thurot will stand the test with any of our modern victories.' Nominally the French squadron was superior to the English; independent of the result, it was not so effectively. The French guns were heavier, but several had been struck below during the bad weather in the northern seas, and had not been remounted; the ships too were of slighter scantling, the Belle-Isle more especially, which was badly hogged even at Gothenburg, and after her capture was not thought worth buying into the service. The number of men, again, was nearly double that of the English, but very many of them were sickly, if not sick; and the bulk were soldiers, who—under such officers as they had—were not only useless in action, but worse than useless, as getting in the way, and swelling the list of killed and wounded. Even had the Blonde and Terpsichore stuck gallantly by their consort, the result must have been the same; for the three English frigates were in good order, well manned and ably commanded; but the manner in which these two kept aloof, by throwing the whole weight of the contest on the Belle-Isle, rendered it beyond question easier and the sooner come at.

About Thurot himself there seems little room for doubt; his contemporaries, alike friends and enemies, speak of him as a bold, daring man, active, energetic, and full of resource; and the fact that during the greater part of three years he kept the English coast in a state of continual apprehension, escaping from, eluding, and,

¹ Nicolas's *Nelson Despatches*, v. 366.

when need was, fighting the English cruisers with which the narrow seas were swarming, is sufficient evidence of his high qualities as a corsair and a leader of a flying squadron. I have already shown how, on different occasions, he declined to push his success against English ships of war to a decisive issue; notably against the Southampton and against the Seahorse—against this last more especially. In doing so I have not wished to impute any base motive to Thurot, whose courage must have been of proof; but I do think that both these actions, and in a less degree that which he fought against the Dolphin and Solebay, illustrate the principle which was then, and continued to be during the century, the ruling principle of the French navy—that of avoiding decisive action;¹ a principle which might occasionally lead to strategic advantage, but which on the other hand exposed them to great tactical danger and absolute loss—as was clearly exemplified on 20 November, 1759, '*la journée de M. de Conflans*'—and which effectually prevented their winning any brilliant success. Thurot fought well when he was forced to fight; but he consistently avoided action whenever he could avoid it, and when he could not, he quitted it at the earliest possible opportunity. He thus, throughout his career, obtained only the reputation of an active and untiring corsair. Had it been otherwise, he might have gained a higher reputation as a warrior, by capturing the Southampton or the Seahorse, against each of which he had an overwhelmingly superior force; and at the last, might have made a much sturdier resistance against the *Æolus* and her consorts. Had he stood boldly towards the English

¹ Compare *Victoires et Conquêtes*, tom. vii. p. 251.

squadron, his companions would scarcely have had the unblushing cowardice to stand away ; but as he crowded sail from the enemy, they did the same ; and by rate of sailing and accident of position, had an excuse—sufficient for them, though it would not have been sufficient for single-hearted, honest, and honourable men—to keep out of the fight.

As to the conduct of M. de Flobert, and the whole body of soldier-officers, the story of which throws a curious light on the capabilities or incapacities of French discipline, there can be but one opinion. Whatever grievances he had, or thought he had, it was his duty to his country and his king to have backed up the commodore. His complaints might and should have waited, after due remonstrance, till their return to France. There can be little doubt that had Flobert entered into Thurot's views and schemes, Belfast would have been sacked. Against a sudden onset such as Thurot proposed, there were no possible means of effective resistance ; though after three days' delay, things would certainly have been very different.

And the history of Thurot's whole career, and more especially of this last campaign, seems to me to show that a naval force, however numerous and active, is not in itself sufficient to protect our commerce from loss, our coasts from insult, and our towns from pillage, at the hands of a small squadron, or even of a single ship, commanded by a man of talent and enterprise. That Thurot failed in inflicting very serious loss on our towns and our shipping, seems to have been due not to any wise precautions of the government—though the elder Pitt was secretary of state—not to the superior might of

our navy, though that crushed him at last ; but to the exceptional severity of the season, to the inherent weakness of French sailors, the inefficiency of French equipment, and the bad discipline of French soldiers. But it is not wise always to trust our safety, our prestige, or our honour either to the caprice of the weather or to the presumed incapacity of a possible enemy.

In person, Thurot is described as of middle height, stout-built and well-made, 'rather robust than genteel, rather comely than handsome ; very brown and extremely florid, with a small scar under his left eye.' Of his private life we know little or nothing ; he died poor, leaving an Irishwoman (*née* Smith) who passed as his wife, and a daughter six months old, dependent on the state, which at that time, meant Madame de Pompadour. We find the daughter coming forward in 1790, with a petition for further support, and being awarded, at the instance of Barrère, a pension of 1,000 francs. His biographer, M. * * *, says that he married about the year 1750 ; but according to Durand, who appears to write in good faith and of personal knowledge, he was, about that time and after, living in Shadwell with an Irish trull whom he had picked up in that not very reputable neighbourhood. Whether this was Miss Smith, the future Mdme. Thurot, or not, is a point on which history does not pronounce an opinion.

CHAPTER XI.

*PAUL JONES,**'THE PIRATE.'*¹

IN the foregoing chapter I have related one of our past experiences of a bold and energetic corsair ; but Thurot is not the only man who, in spite of our naval power, has spread alarm along our coasts ; and the lesson is too important to be lightly set aside. I propose, therefore, to follow up that story with an account of the remarkable man whose name served for many years as the contrioller of the peace of northern nurseries—a police duty that has more recently, as I am told, been entrusted to the Jabberwock or the Bandersnatch.

It is close on one hundred years since an unnamed minstrel of the streets sang in a ballad more frank than polite :

Of heroes and statesmen I'll just mention four
That cannot be matched if we trace the world o'er ;
For none of such fame ever stept o'er the stones²
As German, Jemmy Twitcher, Lord North and Paul Jones.

Through a madheaded war which old England will rue,
At London, at Dublin, and Edinburgh too,
The tradesmen stand still, and the merchant bemoans
The losses he meets with from such as Paul Jones.

¹ *Fraser's Magazine*, April 1878.

If success to our fleets be not quickly restored,
The Leaders in Office to shove from the board,
May they all fare alike, and the De'il pick the bones
Of Germain, Jemmy Twitcher, Lord North and Paul Jones.

Of the first three members of this quartette, I have nothing to say here: their misdeeds are chronicled in every English history. The fourth is, to most English readers, only a name, or if he is anything more, he is 'the pirate.' Paul Jones strongly objected to the word as applied to himself; he had, he said, looked in the dictionary, and found the meaning of pirate to be 'an enemy of mankind.' Now, he was not the enemy of mankind, but only the enemy of England.

Antonio never yet was thief or pirate,
Though I confess, on base and ground enough,
Orsino's enemy.

With a *tu quoque* argument, not wanting in ingenuity, he urged, that as England was then at war with the whole of America, the greater part of Europe, and much of Asia, not to speak of a bit of Africa, she, in point of fact, came as near being the enemy of mankind as could well be conceived; that England was therefore the pirate, not Paul Jones.

But pirate or not, his career and conduct are worth inquiring into and discussing. In doing so I shall endeavour to write as becomes a student of naval history, not as a professional eulogist, still less as an angry reviler. If I can do this I may claim some degree of merit; for though the life of Paul Jones has often been written, it has never yet been written except in a tone of extravagant praise or of senseless disparagement. It is not so that any man's life ought to be written. *Fas est ab hoste doceri.*

If Paul Jones did us great harm at a very trying period of our history, it is worth our while seriously and calmly to inquire what he did, how he did it, and how, in the future, similar harm, injury, or insult is to be guarded against.

The Lives of Paul Jones, to which I have just referred, divide themselves broadly into the two classes I have named. The latter are either chap-books or are based on chap-books: they are dictated by ignorance, or spite, or panic: they have little or no foundation in fact, and, as historical records, they are of no value whatever. The others, whatever pretext of originality they make, may be virtually resolved into two, which, being written or edited under a strong personal as well as national bias, call for great caution in accepting their statements. Of these, one was published as far back as 1825: its author, Mr. Sherburne, was Registrar of the United States' Navy, and had access to many public records and papers, which he quotes from or embodies: he was also able to collect various private or semi-private letters, and was on terms of familiar and domestic intimacy with men who had themselves taken part in the events he has described. He is thus, in many respects, a competent witness, and is entitled to every consideration which his avowed partisanship permits. The other, published in 1830, is based on certain private papers in the possession of Miss Janette Taylor, a niece of Paul Jones: it supplements the first in many interesting points, but is, more even than Mr. Sherburne's, Jones's own account of his conduct under circumstances which writers less partial than himself might well speak of in less favourable terms.¹

¹ Of the other Lives of Paul Jones, I may mention one by Captain A. Shdell Mackenzie, U.S.N., which, take it all in all, is the most satis-

John Paul was born in Scotland, in the stewartry of Kirkcudbright, in the parish of Kirkbean,¹ on 6 July, 1747. About his birth and early years there was no romance whatever, and there is no mystery. He was of respectable though humble parentage; his father, John Paul, being head gardener to Mr. Craik, of Arbigland, and his mother, Jean Macduff, the daughter of a neighbouring farmer. He was the youngest of five children—two, still younger, dying in infancy. He received the ordinary education of a Scottish peasant lad at the parish school, and at the age of twelve was bound apprentice on board the *Friendship*, of Whitehaven, a ship belonging to Mr. Younger, a merchant in the American trade. His first voyage was to the Rappahannock.

Neither is there anything remarkable, romantic, or mysterious in his early career. He is described as steady, anxious to learn, and devoting much of his spare time on shore to study. His elder brother had settled in Virginia, where he was doing well; and with him, in a society above what he might otherwise have

factory that has been published; and a short one by Mr. J. Fenimore Cooper, in his *Lives of Distinguished American Naval Officers*. In these there is nothing original, and their value is purely critical. There is also one more, which is of no value, but which, on account of its pretensions, ought not to be overlooked. Its title is, *Mémoires de Paul Jones . . . écrits par lui-même en Anglais, et traduits sous ses yeux par le citoyen André*, An. VI 1798. It is probable enough that the subject-matter was furnished by Jones, but rather, I incline to think, as current gossip than in a written form.

¹ A distinguished officer of our navy was also born in Kirkbean—Admiral John Campbell. He was the son of the parish minister; entered into the service as a volunteer from a small coasting vessel in which he was apprentice; served as midshipman, master's mate, and master with Anson, in the *Centurion*; was flag captain to Hawke at Quiberon Bay, and captain of the fleet under Keppel in the action off Ushant.

had access to, young Paul seems to have resided whilst in America. After he had made a few voyages in this service, Mr. Younger failed, and the boy, thrown out of employment, obtained a berth as third mate on board the *King George* of Whitehaven, a slaver. He remained in her, or under the same owners, for some three or four years. He was nineteen when he was appointed first mate of the *Two Friends* of Jamaica, also a slaver, and in her he continued for two years. Altogether, he would appear to have served in the not very ennobling capacity of mate of a slaver for not less than five years, up to the critical age of twenty-one; and though he then left the *Two Friends* and the slave trade, there is not the slightest authority for saying, as Captain Mackenzie has said, that he did so 'impelled by an irresistible feeling of disgust at the cruelties and horrors with which it was attended.' There is simply no evidence as to the cause of his leaving the *Two Friends*: he may have quarrelled with the skipper; but as he went home a passenger in a brigantine, the *John* of Kirkcudbright, it is perhaps more likely that five or six years of a tropical climate, of the coast of Africa and the slave trade, had told on his health and had made him desirous of a change. It is also likely enough that, after serving actually at sea for nine years, he thought himself fit for a higher rank than that of mate of a slaver, and had determined to chance the finding it.

Fortune stood his friend. The master and the mate of the *John* both died on the homeward voyage; the passenger, John Paul, took the command and brought the vessel safely to Kirkcudbright; and the owners, to whom he was thus introduced, appointed him, in acknowledg-

ment of his services, to the joint office of master and supercargo. In command of the *John*, he made two voyages to the West Indies ; and his owners having then dissolved partnership, he seems to have been engaged for some time in smuggling between the Isle of Mann and the Solway Frith.

It is only natural that there should be some little doubt as to this period of Paul's life. A smuggler who afterwards attains some social distinction, is scarcely likely to speak too plainly of the past ; and his American biographers, jealous of their hero's reputation, have maintained that he was engaged in legitimate trade. They have argued that between home ports—between the Isle of Mann and England or Scotland—smuggling was out of the question. A reminiscence of Dirk Hatteraick might have corrected such an error, even had they no other sources of knowledge ; for, in point of fact, smuggling continued to be carried on between the Isle of Mann and England until the customs dues were equalised in 1853.

Whether smuggling did or did not agree with Paul's prospects we have no certain knowledge. A year or two later he was in command of the *Betsy* of London, in the West Indian trade, and was afterwards trading on his own account at Tobago and Grenada. To enter on this business he must have had some capital, which, we may suppose he got together by his smuggling speculations. In 1773 his brother in Virginia died without children, and intestate, leaving, it is said, a considerable property. John Paul 'took charge of the estate on behalf of his family,' but it does not appear that the family ever got one penny of it. It is impossible to say what

became of this money : perhaps it had no real existence ; perhaps it was swallowed by the ventures in Tobago or Grenada ; perhaps it was squandered in reckless dissipation : there is simply no evidence. A confused letter written by John Paul four years later speaks of some 1,200*l.* as due to him from Tobago ; but how or why these debts had been left outstanding for so long a time is not explained. All that seems certain is, that after his brother's death he spent the next two years in America, and most of the time, according to his own statement in the letter just referred to, in a state of poverty, almost of destitution.

Whether a bustling, energetic man like John Paul would subsist for twenty months on a small sum if he had a good business, may seem more than doubtful. Of his reasons for so subsisting, for abandoning, at the age of twenty-six, both his business as a merchant and his calling as a seaman to go into hiding so close that all the researches of his admiring biographers have not been able to find out where he was or what he was doing, there is not a trace : and we cannot be surprised that the world, and those who know the world, such as Sir Peter Teazle described it, have been ready to doubt both the honesty of John Paul, and the purity of John Paul's character.

From this mysterious hiding he emerged in December 1775, and under the assumed name of Jones—an alias which his future career rendered notorious—joined the revolutionary navy, then first forming.

I have been thus particular in tracing the early life of John Paul, because its detail, uninteresting in itself, appears to offer some explanation of both his character and his choice of a career. A peasant lad, who had been

knocking about the world in small trading ships from the time he was twelve years old; who had served during five or six years, as he was growing from boyhood into manhood, on board a slaver; a Manx smuggler, a ruined merchant, possibly, a fraudulent bankrupt, or too clever executor, is not the man whose path we should expect to find obstructed by needless or even customary scruples. The world was his oyster? with his sword he would open it. He felt himself capable of achieving distinction, if only he had a field for his talents; and he had seen enough to make him believe that in the war then breaking out, the revolutionary side would give him the greatest opportunities. To him, country was an idle word, patriotism an unknown idea. Through life, the one object of his worship and admiration was himself. It has been urged plausibly enough, that mere selfishness or greed would have prompted John Paul to have sought for service rather in command of a privateer, and to have cruised against English commerce, which would have been decidedly more lucrative than service on board a ship of war. It does not, however, follow that John Paul so considered it. He may—for aught we know to the contrary—have been unable to find a merchant willing to entrust him with a command. He may have felt that a commission in the national navy would gratify his vanity more than sacks of dollars or doubloons. He was—his whole after-life proves him to have been—the vainest of men; and it is quite possible that on this, the turning point in his career, it was his vanity that steered his selfishness. It is difficult to detect in his conduct, apart from his assertions, any trace of what Captain Mackenzie has called ‘a chivalrous longing for glory;’

and, in any case, I positively deny the 'enthusiasm in the cause of America.'

But whatever were the guiding motives of Paul, or Jones, as he now became, what is certain is that he applied for and obtained a commission in the newly born continental navy; that in December 1775 he was appointed first lieutenant of the *Alfred*, a frigate of thirty guns, and three hundred men, the flagship of Commodore Hopkins; and that he served in her in the first operation undertaken by an American squadron—the attack on and capture of New Providence—and on 6 April, 1776, as they were returning, in the engagement with the English 20-gun frigate, *Glasgow*. The six American ships ought to have effected an easy capture; but they were badly fitted, badly manned, badly officered; and notwithstanding their enormous superiority in numbers, the *Glasgow*, though roughly handled in a running fight of several hours' duration, succeeded in making good her escape.

After this, Jones was appointed to the command of the *Providence*, sloop, carrying 12 four-pounders, and employed in convoying American ships along the coast, or in cruising against English commerce, in which he had a very marked success. On September, he fell in with the *Solebay*,¹ of 28 guns, nine-pounders, near Bermuda, and, mistaking her for a merchant ship, ran down to engage her. Between a frigate such as the *Solebay*, and the little *Providence*, there could be no contest; the sloop hauled her wind and endeavoured to

¹ Built in 1763, of 619 tons. The old one, mentioned *ante* pp 254, 338, of 429 tons, built in 1742, had been sold out of the service very shortly after her engagement with the *Belle-Isle*.

escape : but the frigate outsailed her, and, after a chase of four hours, got within musket-shot on her lee quarter. The situation was critical. Jones edged away to leeward so gradually that Captain Symonds of the Solebay probably thought that he was weathering on the chase ; but having thus, without awakening suspicion, brought the frigate on her weather quarter, the Providence's helm was put sharply up, and, crowding sail, she went off dead before the wind. The Solebay's lee ports were closed, her lee guns apparently not cast loose ; and before she could follow, or get a gun to bear, the Providence was well away, on her best point of sailing. Jones's escape is by no means without a parallel : that of Lord Dundonald in the Pallas,¹ from under the guns of three French line-of-battle ships, will probably at once recur to the reader, and other similar instances might easily be found ; but it is no light praise to compare, even with a difference, the deed of an untried man and an untried crew, under the guns of an English frigate, with one of Dundonald's smartest pieces of seamanship.

A few days later, the Providence was again chased by the Milford, a frigate of the same force as the Solebay, but here she outsailed with ease, and the occurrence is no further noteworthy than as having given Jones the opportunity of writing a grandiloquent despatch. He was shortly afterwards appointed to the Alfred for a cruise, and then again to the Providence ; and finally, after various plans and changes of plans, to the command of the Ranger, a new frigate-built ship of 26 guns, which was ordered to cross over to France.

His appointment is conveyed in a resolution of Con-

¹ *Autobiography of a Seaman*, i. 177.

gress dated 14 June, 1777; the same which also decreed that 'the flag of the thirteen United States be thirteen stripes, alternate red and white; that the union be thirteen stars, white in a blue field, representing a new constellation;' and it is said, principally—I believe entirely—on Jones's own authority, that this flag was first hoisted on board the *Ranger*, and by Jones's own hands. But Jones also claimed to have hoisted, on board the *Alfred*, two years before, the earlier revolutionary flag—a pine-tree, with a rattle-snake coiled round its root, and the motto, *DON'T TREAD ON ME*; and though it is undoubted that these flags were first hoisted at or within a few days of the dates named, and though there is nothing impossible involved in the statement that Jones hoisted them both for the first time, the coincidence is improbable; and on such a point, flattering to his vanity, Jones's unsupported testimony, difficult to contradict, is entitled to very little weight.

The difficulties in the way of fitting out the *Ranger* were very great. The supply of stores was extremely scanty, and there was no money; it was 1 November before she sailed, and then with only a single suit of sails and one 30-gallon cask of rum. The ship herself was of a scantling so slight that Jones determined not to take the quarter-deck or forecastle guns on board; and her armament was thus reduced to 18 guns on her main deck¹—probably 6-pounders.² On the passage, she showed herself extremely crank, and after her arrival at Nantes her

¹ I have here, and throughout, used the term *main deck* in its modern sense; in the last century what we now call the main deck was called the upper deck, and really was so from the main to the foremast.

² When the *Ranger* was taken at Charleston in April 1780, she carried 20 six-pounders.

masts had to be shortened and her stowage re-arranged, in hopes of making her stiffer ; but when all was done, she was still very far from being an efficient cruiser.

The relations between England, France, and the revolted States of America were at that time peculiar. The Peace of Paris, in 1763, which had wound up the Seven Years' War with England, still rankled in French bosoms. It was felt that, by its terms, this peace was a standing injury and insult to France, to which the war had been a series of disasters and humiliations, sustained—it is difficult to apportion exactly the praise or blame—at the hands of Hawke and Conflans, Boscawen and De la Clue, Saunders, Wolfe, Pitt, and Madame de Pompadour. The French navy had been destroyed, the French colonial empire had been wiped out, and now, after fifteen years' peace, nursing their strength, enlisting soldiers and building ships, under a new king and a male government, it was hoped that the time for revenge had arrived. There was no present cause of quarrel with England, but the French people caught eagerly at the idea of England's embarrassment, and brought the pressure of what public opinion France had on the government, which gave a not unwilling friendship to the American States, extended it into an official recognition, and, on 6 February 1778, to a distinct treaty of alliance with 'the United States of America,' in which stand, amongst others, such articles as these :

II. The essential and direct end of the present defensive alliance is to maintain effectually the liberty, sovereignty, and independence, absolute and unlimited, of the said United States, as well in matters of government as of commerce.

VIII. Neither of the two parties shall conclude either

truce or peace with Great Britain without the formal consent of the other, first obtained ; and they mutually engage not to lay down their arms until the independence of the United States shall have been formally or tacitly assured by the treaty or treaties that shall terminate the war.

Notwithstanding this, and though the American commissioners, Benjamin Franklin and his colleagues, were publicly and officially received at the French Court, though the English seas swarmed with French privateers under the American flag, there was no declaration of war ; and when, some few months afterwards, the English government, weary of the duplicity of the French ministry, and of the real though veiled hostility of the French people, forced their hand by seizing the *Licorne* and *Pallas* (18 June, 1778), they and their partisans in England complained bitterly of the breach of international faith, in commencing hostile operations without a formal declaration. An amusing sample of this is contained in one of Mason's letters to Horace Walpole, 14 August, 1778 :

' Our poor country,' he says, ' from being once a well-bred gentleman, is now turned a downright blackguard. A gentleman, when he has received an affront, sends his challenge, and then fights his duel. A blackguard, in similar circumstances, drives his fist directly at the jawl of his adversary, and waives the ceremonial of the challenge. I leave you to make the application ; only I protest that had Keppel been victorious, I should have hesitated about ringing the three cracked bells in my country steeple ; for I can never think a fair victory can be gained over an enemy before war has been declared.'

We may think it strange that Mr. Mason, living in the society of the eighteenth century, should be so ignorant of the customs of the *duello* as not to know that

disputes or quarrels between armed gentlemen were, by almost legal right, settled off-hand in a 'casual rencounter,' or that his poetical reading did not furnish him with many a precedent; for, according to the text of the *Faery Queene*, a mere unwelcome presence was, in the days of chivalry, sufficient reason for couching the 'steale-headed speare.' His ignorance of historical precedent is not so singular, for writers of the present day, men far above Mason in both knowledge and ability, have been influenced by a similar error.

But, looking back through our modern annals, the fact stands out clearly that a declaration on either side, as a beginning of war, is very exceptional. The wars with Spain in 1588, in 1718, and in 1739; the wars with Holland in 1652, in 1665, and, infamy and all, in 1672; or with France in 1744, in 1755, and now again in 1778, were all opened by actual hostilities on one part or the other, which, after a more or less long interval, a declaration sometimes followed. It is well that this should be remembered; for though international lawyers lay down the rule that hostilities, actually undertaken, may be considered, at the option of the injured party, as equivalent to a declaration of war, there is a very general, but, as I have just shown, a very mistaken idea that such a course is irregular, one that is not to be looked for—one, therefore, that need not be guarded against.

Jones, having taken the *Ranger* from Nantes to Brest—and having on the way obtained, after some negotiation, and, as he asserted, for the first time, a return salute and the formal recognition of the American flag from M. de la Motte Picquet, commanding the French fleet in Quiberon Bay—refitted at Brest, and

from thence sailed on 10 April for a cruise. His local knowledge had suggested to him the possibility of harrying the coasts of the Irish Sea, of Cumberland, Wigton or Kirkcudbright, Antrim, and the Isle of Mann. He arrived on what may be considered as his station on 18 April; and having a fair wind, determined to commence operations by burning the shipping in Whitehaven, a considerable port at the present time, but relatively of more importance a hundred years ago, when Liverpool and Glasgow had not yet swallowed up all the American trade. But the next morning, as he was off the harbour, the wind freshened to a gale blowing dead on shore; and, far from being able to land his men, Jones had to exert himself to the utmost to save his ship. It was not without difficulty that he escaped from this very serious danger.

On the 21st, being off the entrance of Belfast Lough, he learned that the Drake, a sloop of war, was at anchor inside, and conceived the bold idea of carrying her by surprise. His plan was to run in in the dark, let go his anchor on top of the Drake's, swing down across her bow, and board. It was not known, not even suspected, that an American cruiser was on the coast; some privateers had, indeed, been giving trouble, capturing and destroying coasting vessels and others; but the idea of one of these attacking a ship of war had probably never been entertained: for all practical purposes, to the officers and men of the Drake at anchor, it was a time of peace; and as was then, and for long after, the custom of the service, the watch was most negligently kept. It was a cold night, blowing fresh, and the chances are that not a dozen men on board were awake,

whilst on shore there were neither forts nor soldiers. In any case, the Ranger had more guns, and a larger ship's company than the Drake; and the plan, though dashing, was by no means extravagant. As it happened, however, the Ranger had too much way on, and though she let go her anchor accurately enough, she passed the Drake, and brought up on her quarter. Even then there was no alarm; and Jones, with apt presence of mind, immediately cut the cable, so as to make it appear that it had parted, and stretched out to seaward, intending to return and try again. But this he was not able to do, for the wind freshened to a fierce gale, and he had again to provide for the Ranger's safety, and to shelter under the lee of the Scotch coast.

The next day, 22 April, the weather had moderated, and he determined to have another try at Whitehaven. A light breeze brought the Ranger off the town in the early part of the night; and by midnight the two boats, carrying thirty-one officers and men, all told, shoved off from the ship. They had hoped to be inside the harbour while it was still dark, but the strong ebb tide delayed them somewhat, and, by the time they had reached the outer pier, day was beginning to break.

The harbour was, as it still is, dry at low water; this Jones knew, and had counted on. The ships, to the number of nearly 300, of all sizes up to 400 tons burden, were helplessly aground; nor, if they were set on fire, could water possibly be got to extinguish the flames. One of the boats was sent to burn the ships on the north side; Jones with the other, landed on the New Quay; the West Pier had not then been built. At the land end of the quay stood a battery, which had been built

eighteen years before, after Thurot had frightened the burghers into some sense of possible danger; but the danger had been forgotten, and the battery had been neglected: it was little more than a ruin, armed with a few worn-out and honeycombed old guns, in charge of a few equally worn-out old pensioners, who at four o'clock in the morning were sound asleep in their beds. Jones, with a few men, clambered over the rampart of the 'battery,' captured 'the guard,' and spiked 'the guns,' of which, he says, there were thirty: he does not say what condition they were in. Then, leaving his party to set fire to the ships on the south side, he, with one man, went off to another so-called battery, 200 yards distant, on the point of the beach opposite Tom Hurd's rock; this had apparently no guard at all, and its guns, such as they were, were spiked without opposition.

When he returned to the quay he found that his orders to set fire to the ships had been disobeyed; that the candles had burnt out, and there was no light. The boat had come back from the north side without doing anything; the lieutenant in charge of it said that 'nothing could be gained by burning poor people's property;' the officer left in charge of the second party had possibly the same idea. It was almost sunrise; the inhabitants were beginning to wake up, to assemble in alarm; and nothing had been done.

Jones, excessively angry, did at the last moment get a light, kindle with his own hands a large fire in the steerage of one ship, high and dry amongst a number of others, empty a tar barrel into the flames, and, having seen it well a-low, make off to the boat. It was time, for the sun was now up, and the townsmen were gathering

in numbers that threatened every moment to become formidable. But the guns, even if there were any that could be called serviceable—which is doubtful—had been spiked, and the boats effected their retreat without loss. One man only was missing, and he had deserted; he seems to have been a Whitehaven man, David Freeman by name; to have slipped away from his party in the grey of the morning, and to have done his best to wake up his fellow-townsmen. It was thus to the double treachery of this rascal, as much as to the incapacity or sentiment of the subordinate officers, that Whitehaven owed its safety.

The injury to the English or Irish trade might have been enormous; as it was, the affair was regarded rather as an insult, the irony of which was heightened by the fact that it was offered on St. George's Day. But that this insignificant little party, notwithstanding all delays of wind and tide, of fools and traitors, came still so near to the destruction of the town and the shipping, is a fact that no lapse of time should permit us to forget.

Jones had a particular weakness, common, perhaps, to most self-half-educated men, for fine writing, and his report of this attempt is very 'fine.'

'The inhabitants,' he says, 'began to appear in thousands, and individuals ran hastily towards us; I stood between them and the ship on fire, with a pistol in my hand, and ordered them to retire, which they did with precipitation. The flames had already caught the rigging, and began to ascend the mainmast: the sun was a full hour's march above the horizon, and as sleep no longer ruled the world, it was time to retire. We re-embarked without opposition, having released a number of prisoners, as our boats could not carry them. After all my people had embarked I stood upon the pier for a considerable

space, yet no person advanced. I saw all the eminences round the town covered with the amazed inhabitants.'

As soon as the boats got on board, the *Ranger* stood across into Kirkeudbright Bay, and anchoring there, landed a small party on St. Mary's Isle, a prettily wooded peninsula about a mile below the town, on which stood the house of the Earl of Selkirk. From early childish recollections, Jones had an exaggerated idea of the political importance of the earl: it was therefore his intention to carry him off as a prisoner; to hold him as, in some measure, a hostage for the safety of several self-called Americans, prisoners of war, and compel, or through his influence persuade, the English government to acknowledge a system of exchange. Kidnapping a private gentleman, and constituting him a prisoner of war, is an idea that in modern times has occurred only to Captain John Paul Jones; but it did occur to him, and Lord Selkirk's accidental absence from home was the only reason why effect was not given to it.

Jones, on learning that his project had thus fallen through, ordered his men down to the boat. They remonstrated. They said that the English, landing on the American coast, did not spare private property, and they thought it very hard that they should be made to do so, now that they had a chance of reprisal. They demanded, rather than requested, leave to go up and loot the house. As a compromise Jones sent them up under the orders of two lieutenants, Simpson and Elijah Hall, the last of whom was afterwards Mr. Sherburne's father-in-law, and may fairly be supposed to have biassed his judgment in respect to this affair. The robbery seems to have been committed with almost burlesque civility; the men stayed

outside, and drank Lady Selkirk's health in prime Scotch whisky, whilst Messrs. Simpson and Hall, indoors, cleared the breakfast table of the silver tea equipage—the teapot with the tea-leaves still in it. With this they returned to their boat, went on board, and the ship immediately weighed and stood out to sea.

The value of the booty is said to have been, at the outside, not more than 100*l.*, though vulgar report absurdly magnified it. Jones's share in the transaction seems to have been altogether against his will, and caused by the rowdiness and want of discipline of his men, whom he was unable to control; none the less, it was on Jones that the weight of popular indignation fell; he was cried down as a pirate, a buccaneer, or a burglar of the lowest and most brutal type, and it is as such that, in the minds of many, his fame has been preserved, thanks to sundry outrageous pictures and jingling ballads. A few verses of one of these will be sufficient:

You have heard o' Paul Jones ?
 Have you not ? Have you not ?
 And you've heard o' Paul Jones ?
 Have you not ?

 He was a rogue and a vagabond ;
 Was he not ? Was he not ? (*bis*)

 He came to Selkirk-ha',
 Did he not ? Did he not ? (*bis*)

 And stole the rings and the jewels a',
 Did he not ? Did he not ?
 Stole the rings and the jewels a',
 Did he not ?

And so on, and so on, till the hearers have had enough of it.

The morning after this ill-judged or unfortunate affair, 24 April, Jones was again off the entrance of Belfast Lough, intending to find some opportunity of attacking the Drake should she be still there. As if to meet his wishes, she was seen slowly working out against the tide and a light easterly breeze.

The Drake had been warned of the Ranger's presence on the coast, whether by signal smokes or otherwise. The occurrences of the night of the 21st had excited her curiosity, and still more so as, when she weighed her anchor on the afternoon of the 22nd, she had found a strange anchor and 56 fathom of cable, newly cut, entangled with it. She is said even to have received information of the previous day's attempt on Whitehaven : but evidently, whatever information she had was very vague ; and seeing the Ranger hove-to off the mouth of the Lough, she unsuspectingly sent her boat on board to ask the news. The boat, boat's crew and officer, were of course detained. The wind was easterly, a nice working breeze, but it was evening before the Drake got outside, clear of the land. The Ranger ran down towards her, hauled up her courses, and lay-to, with the main-topsail to the mast ; but as the Drake came within hail on her lee quarter she filled again and gathered steerage way. The Drake hailed : ' What ship is that ? ' Answered the Ranger in the Jonesian dialect, ' This is the American continental ship Ranger ; we wait for you, and beg you will come on ; the sun is little more than an hour high, and it is time to begin.'

In language, Jones was the most wordy of men ; in deed, he was short, sharp, and to the point. Almost whilst the answer to the hail was being shouted back he

put his helm up, and as his ship paid off, passed slowly across the Drake's bows and poured in a raking fire at very close range. The Drake thus began the action at a serious disadvantage, and as she in turn bore up and engaged broadside to broadside, the heavier armament and better-sustained fire of her opponent knocked her to pieces: in sixty-five minutes she was a wreck and struck her flag; her captain shot through the head, her lieutenant mortally wounded, three others killed and twenty wounded. The loss of the Ranger was in comparison trifling—one officer and two men killed, five wounded.

This action, such as it was, was the first naval success of the Americans. They had captured in open fight a British ship of war; their exultation was very great, and the more so as Jones, in his report, described the Drake as a 20-gun frigate—mounting two guns more than the Ranger. This was true only to the uninitiated. The Drake was rated as a 14-gun sloop; and though she did actually carry 20 guns, they were but four-pounders, and all exposed. He was, however, right in saying that, in addition to her complement of 100, she had taken on board some 50 or 60 volunteers for the occasion: they were mostly landsmen, but able to do duty as small-arm men. But it appears from the evidence on the court-martial that the ship was not in a fit state for actual service. She had no lieutenant, gunner, boatswain or master's mate; though while she was under way, working out of the lough, 'Lieutenant William Dobbs,'¹ from a principle that does honour to his memory, voluntarily came on board and acted in the station of a lieutenant.

¹ Mr. Dobbs was at Belfast on impress service, and was thus able to bring with him a number of the newly raised men.

The powder was worthless ; ' our shot had not force enough to go through her sides, though we were not above half a pistol-shot distance from her all the time of the engagement ; the impression of which was shown me on the 7 May, 1778.' The matches were bad, cartridges were not filled, powder was not handed : ' many people placed at the great guns, early in the action, were obliged to quit their quarters to light matches, which frequently used to extinguish, and in search of cartridges, which were, a great part of the time of the engagement, not to be had ; the people stationed at the small arms obliged to quit their quarters for want of ammunition.' And every witness tells the same story. ' She wanted powder for the great guns and small-arms, owing to the acting gunner not handing the powder up : there was not a sufficient number of musket cartridges filled ; the matches frequently went out during the engagement. I believe it was owing to the badness of the match and unskilfulness of some of the men.' ' Four of the aftermost guns, by the sudden rise of the quarter-deck, were rendered useless ; the major part of the other guns, when fired, used to fall upon their muzzles. I apprehend from the fore-trucks being too low. I believe the guns were purchased by the merchants.' A ship in such a condition—without officers, without guns, without powder, without match—scarcely needed to meet a more powerful enemy to become a ready prize. The American was more powerful : her scantling was stouter, her guns were heavier and were sheltered. Against such, the Drake could have little chance ; and what chance she might have had she threw away, in permitting the Ranger to rake her at the outset, and in afterwards engaging broadside to broadside.

the current expenses of his ship. The commissioners could not and would not give it him; and when Jones drew on them for 24,000 livres—say, 1,000*l.*—they promptly dishonoured the bill. On this, naturally enough, an angry correspondence ensued; and it appears that for some time Jones was left absolutely dependent, not only for ship's stores, but for men's provisions, on what money he could raise by the sale of various small prizes which he had sent in.

Under these circumstances it is not to be wondered at that the ship's company, bound together by no tie of patriotism or discipline, became discontented and mutinous. Simpson, the first lieutenant, headed the mutineers at Brest, as he had headed the robbers at St. Mary's Isle. He said that Jones had formally promised him the command of the *Ranger*, and that, at any rate, he and the ship's company were Americans, and were not going to be put upon by a foreigner such as Jones. Neither Jones nor the commissioners had authority to stamp out this mutiny. It seems that the command of the *Ranger* really had been promised to Simpson, when it was hoped that the Amsterdam ship—the *Indienne*, or *South Carolina*, as she was eventually called—would be ready for Jones; and though this hope had been rendered vain by the energetic or threatening remonstrances of the English minister at the Hague, the only plan that could be devised for quieting the disturbances on board the *Ranger* was to give Simpson the promised command, and send the ship and him and the mutinous crew home together.

Meantime Jones had been anxiously proposing several schemes for, as he conceived, forwarding the American

cause by harrying the coast of his native country. Amongst these, the burning the shipping and town of Whitehaven occupied a prominent place; others were the sacking and burning of Ayr, of Greenock, of Port Glasgow, of the shipping in the Clyde; on the other side, Newcastle might, he thought, be burned, and the Baltic trade might be cut off. There is no doubt that many or all of these schemes might have been carried out, had the means at Jones's disposal been equal to his will; but he had no ship, no men, and no money, and the commissioners were unable, the French government unwilling, to entrust him with them. At first, indeed, there seemed a chance of his being put in command of a French ship, or even of a French squadron, to cruise against England under the American flag; but when, in July, war between England and France was declared, effectively, though without the customary formalities, there was no longer any occasion for this duplicity, and the French ships sailed under the French flag. The minister of the French navy, M. de Sartine, who had before then rather encouraged his pretensions, would no longer hold out any hopes of employment; and in his rage and vexation Jones's correspondence passed through various and amusing phases of vanity, self-love, flattery, and invective.

It was not till the following spring that he could obtain authority to commission, as a ship of war under the American flag, the *Duc de Duras*, an old East India-man, then lying at L'Orient, and capable of mounting forty guns. She was to be fitted out and armed by the French government, and Jones was to endeavour to pick up a crew of Americans.

'But,' wrote Sartine, 'as you may find difficulty in raising a sufficient number, the king permits you to levy volunteers until you obtain men enough. It shall be my care,' he added, 'to procure the necessary officers, and you may be assured that I shall contribute every aid in my power to promote the success of your enterprise.'

He—the French minister—then went on to give him—the American captain—his instructions :

As soon as you are prepared for sea, you will set sail, without waiting for any ulterior orders ; and you will yourself select your own cruising ground, either in the European or American seas, observing always to render me an exact account of each event that may take place during your cruise, as often as you may enter any port under the dominion of the king. So flattering a mark of the confidence with which you are honoured cannot but encourage you to use all your zeal in the common cause ; and I am persuaded that you will justify on every occasion my favourable opinion of you.

In conclusion, he gave him permission to change the name of his ship from *Duc de Duras* to *Bonhomme Richard*, as Jones had requested, out of compliment to Dr. Franklin, whose '*Poor Richard's Almanac*' had given him the hint,¹ 'If you would have your business done, go ; if not, send,' on which he had acted at the turning point of the negotiations regarding the ship.

The armament of the *Bonhomme Richard* was peculiar : it consisted of 12-pounders on the main-deck, 9-pounders on the quarter-deck, and 6-pounders on the fore-castle ; but in addition, in the gun-room on the lower deck, were six 18-pounders ; and extra ports were

¹ *Poor Richard's Almanac* had been translated into French under the title *La Science du Bonhomme Richard*

cut, to permit her to fight these all on one side. She thus mounted forty guns in all. The ship, a converted merchantman, was a makeshift throughout, including what seems now the curious device of a frigate-built ship thus carrying a partial lower battery.¹

The crew was as mixed as the armament. A few self-called Americans were got together : merchant seamen out of employ loafing about the French ports, or renegade prisoners of war ; but even these did not at first amount to more than thirty. About 150 were French volunteers, peasants newly enlisted by promises of bounty and booty ; the rest were outcasts from every nation in Europe and from some in Asia ; English or Irish, Swedes, Norwegians, Portuguese, Lascars, are all prominently named. Before, however, the ship was finally ready for sea, a cartel arrived with 119 American prisoners of war, and of these it is believed that a large proportion entered on board the *Bonhomme Richard* ; some of them certainly did ; but when all is said, it is doubtful whether of the 380 men with which she sailed from L'Orient on 14 August, 1779, even the eighty were Americans.

With the *Bonhomme Richard* were associated the *Alliance*, an American-built frigate of 36 guns, manned, for the most part, by Americans, but commanded by a Frenchman, Pierre Landais, the master of a French merchant ship, who had taken service under the American government ; a man, it would appear, of low birth and disreputable antecedents ; a man of neither temper, courage, nor conduct ; the *Pallas*, a French ship of 32

¹ Thurot's *Belle-Isle* was apparently armed in a similar manner on her last cruise (cf. *ante*, p. 342), and it seems probable that the practice was not uncommon amongst French corsairs or privateers.

guns, commanded also by a Frenchman, Cottineau; the *Cerf* of 18 guns and the *Vengeance* of 12; French like the *Pallas*, in all respects; but like her also sailing under the stars and stripes. In the whole squadron the only American of character or reputation was Richard—afterwards well known in American naval history as Commodore—Dale. He was now twenty-three years of age, and having just escaped from an English prison, joined the *Bonhomme Richard* while she was fitting out, and was appointed her first lieutenant.

The first proceeding of the squadron was as remarkable as its composition. The several captains of the five ships signed an agreement, or *concordat* as it has been called. By it they pledged themselves to act together under the commission from the United States government, unless ordered otherwise by the French minister; the proportion of prize money to each ship was to be regulated by the French and American ministers jointly; but the division to the men was to be made according to American prize law. The practical effect of this *concordat* was to constitute the command of the squadron a petty republic, of which the several captains formed what may be styled the Directory, and according to their individual pleasure or whim, obeyed or disobeyed the orders of the nominal commander-in-chief.

The squadron put to sea on 14 August; on the 23rd, being off Cape Clear, a number of men, twenty in all, with one of the officers—the third lieutenant—of the *Bonhomme Richard*, took the opportunity of a calm and fog to desert with two of the ship's boats; the *Cerf* also parted company and did not rejoin. The independent

feeling of the captains showed itself in insolence and insubordination. Landais came on board and reproached Jones in the most disrespectful manner for losing his boats, saying that he—Landais—was the only American in the squadron, and that he meant henceforth to act according to his own judgment. It may perhaps be thought doubtful how far all this is true; but it does not rest merely on Jones's report; it is fully corroborated by other and independent witnesses; for Landais's conduct was afterwards officially inquired into, and his gross misconduct throughout the whole cruise officially proved. Party intrigue, indeed, prevented his being punished; but he was eventually retired from the service as insane.

From the neighbourhood of Cape Clear, where several prizes were made, the squadron passed to the north, along the west coast of Ireland. The rendezvous seems to have been Cape Wrath, and the ships, separated by carelessness or bad weather, rejoined each other in that neighbourhood, where they made two valuable prizes estimated as worth 40,000*l*. These prizes Landais, without orders, sent to Bergen, where the Danish government gave them up to the English: a restitution which afterwards gave rise to some curious negotiations.

A day or two later, the Alliance again parted company, and the other three ships sailed down the east coast of Scotland. On 14 September they were off the Forth, and having a leading wind up the firth, Jones conceived that he might lay Leith and Edinburgh under a heavy contribution, capture a 20-gun ship that was at anchor in Leith roads, and second the attack which he had been

given to understand the grand fleet of France and Spain was, about the same time, to make in the south of England. The idea was formed with correct judgment; though, in point of fact, that fleet had been already repelled; beaten back, not by the prudence and forethought of the English government, represented by Lord Sandwich; not by the tactical skill of our admirals, represented by Sir Charles Hardy; not even by the valour of British seamen, compelled, by a shameful parsimony and their inadequate numbers, to shelter behind the sandbanks of Spithead; but by the culpable ignorance and criminal carelessness of M. de Sartine; by the bad provisions, the dirt, and the uncalled-for hardships of the French and Spanish sailors and soldiers; by scurvy, dysentery, and putrid fever. M. d'Orvilliers, with his utterly disorganised fleet, anchored in Brest roads on the same day that Jones, hoping to make a diversion in his favour, was off the Forth.

But Jones, although commodore of the squadron, was powerless; he could not order, he could only advise; and neither of his colleagues, the captains of the *Pallas* and *Vengeance*, would agree to the bold measure he advocated. It was only after a long discussion carried far into the night, and the argument that 200,000*l.* were waiting to be picked up, that they at last consented. But in the morning the wind was foul, and the progress of the squadron working against it was slow. A small collier was captured, and the master—Andrew Robertson by name—agreed, as a ransom, to pilot them into the Leith roads. On the next day, the 16th, as they were in with the coast of Fife, under English colours, a boat came off from a gentleman of the neighbourhood to ask for some

powder and shot to defend himself against 'the expected visit of the pirate Paul Jones.' Jones, in the quality of a king's officer, sent him a polite message and a barrel of powder, regretted that he had no shot of the size wanted, and had taken the liberty of keeping one of his boatmen as a pilot. These little incidents are important as showing that a bold corsair has no difficulty in laying hands on the requisite pilots.

The wind continued westerly, and during the 16th and 17th the squadron beat slowly up the firth. Its character had by this time been recognised. The alarm was extreme; the excitement was intense. A rude pretext at a battery was hastily thrown up at Leith, but the confusion and panic were too great to permit hopes of any serious resistance. In making a tack to the northward, the ships headed towards Kirkcaldy, and stood over to within about a mile of the town. The minister—celebrated amongst even Fife eccentricities—held a prayer-meeting on the beach. On both sides of the Forth the game seemed to be in Jones's hands. The ships were almost within gunshot of Leith, when the wind, foul all along, freshened suddenly to a fierce gale, and drove them back: they were obliged to bear up and run out of the Forth.

When the squall had passed, they were too far to seaward to return at once; and Jones, thinking that the alarm had been given too effectually to allow him to repeat the attempt, determined to direct his course to the southward. His wish was to carry out in the Tyne what he had failed to do in the Forth. He fully understood that the wholesale destruction of Tyne shipping would, by stopping the supply of sea-coal at the beginning of

winter, be a most severe blow to London ; but Captain Cottineau, whom, by the terms of the *concordat*, he was bound to consult, was obstinate in his refusal. They accordingly continued their voyage, and on the morning of 23 September fell in with the Alliance.

Landais's conduct throughout would seem to have been directed by hatred of Jones and by cupidity, rather than by cowardice, or even treason. Had he wished merely to provide for his own safety, it would have been easier to return, as he had come, by the west of Ireland. As he decided to go rather by the east of England, it would seem that he was quite aware of the possible advantage of cruising in a sea alive with English commerce, and of doing so by himself. Such considerations will, I think, explain many of his so-called 'vagaries.' He was disgusted at meeting again with the squadron, and did not pretend to be otherwise when, an hour or two later, they sighted a large fleet of merchant shipping—pronounced by the pilot to be the Baltic trade—coming southwards round Flamborough Head. It was under the convoy of two ships of war, the *Serapis* of 44 guns, and the *Countess of Scarborough*, a hired vessel, mounting 20 guns, presumably 6-pounders, on a flush deck. These, on making out the American ships, of which they probably had warning, stretched to the southward; with the wind at about south-west, so as to place themselves between their charge and the possible enemy; whilst the convoy stood in shore on the other tack. Jones made the signal to form line of battle, a signal to which the Alliance paid no attention, but stood towards the convoy, hoping perhaps to be able to pass by the ships of war, and to capture a number of the

merchantmen. Jones's idea was to fight, Landais's to plunder.

About six o'clock the two English ships, which had been standing together towards the south, tacked, thus crossing ahead of the Americans, and keeping between them and the convoy. It was a lovely autumn evening, and Flamborough Head, distant barely a league, was crowded with people, whom the rumours of the day had drawn to the neighbourhood: as the sun set, the full harvest moon rose and lighted up the scene, permitting them to see, or to fancy they saw, the events that were passing off their coast.¹

About half-past seven the Bonhomme Richard was within hail of the Serapis, to windward but somewhat on her quarter, both ships standing in for the land on the port tack. The hail was answered, as it was followed, by a broadside; the fire seems to have been simultaneous; and in this way began a fight which, in modern naval history, has no parallel. I will therefore pause a moment to take an exact view of the opposing forces.

The Pallas,² a 32-gun frigate, mounting, in all probability, 9-pounders on her main-deck, bore away for the Countess of Scarborough, a ship utterly unable to contend effectively with such an opponent. She did indeed offer a very creditable resistance, but after an hour was obliged to haul down her colours, and the Pallas,

¹ There was meantime great excitement at Hull. See Albemarle's *Memoirs of Rockingham*, ii. 383.

² The French frigates of 32 guns were of two classes, one mounting 12-, the other 8-pounders (French weight) on the main-deck. I fancy this Pallas was of the smaller class—if indeed she was a king's ship at all, which is not quite clear; for a Pallas had been captured by Keppel in the preceding year.

occupied for the rest of the time in taking possession of her prize, had no share in the fight with the *Serapis*.

The *Alliance* is spoken of as of 36 guns, but being American, without any establishment, it is difficult to say what her armament was. In the English or French navies, 36-gun frigates at that time carried 12-pounders on the main-deck; and I should think it most likely that the *Alliance* did so too, though it is of course possible that she had only 9-pounders. I believe that, of the squadron, the *Alliance* was most like a ship of war, had she only been properly commanded; but under a man like Landais she proved of little value. In the early part of the engagement she is described as sailing at some distance round the *Pallas* and the *Countess of Scarborough*, firing promiscuously at both of them, which, in the dark, while the moon was only yet rising, did as much harm to friend as to foe; and she does not seem to have at any time really engaged the *Serapis* in support of her consort, the *Bonhomme Richard*.

But the force of the *Serapis* was such as might be considered not a very unequal match for the *Bonhomme Richard* and the *Alliance* together. She was of a class then much esteemed for service in the narrow seas and smooth water, being particularly handy by reason of their shortness. She was a 44-gun two-decker; on her lower deck she mounted 18-pounders; 12-pounders on her main-deck. The double battery and the heavier guns gave her an undoubted superiority over the *Bonhomme Richard*, two of whose makeshift 18-pounders in the gun-room—old worn-out guns—burst at the second round, killing and wounding a number of the men, and partly blowing up the deck overhead. The accident spread a

panic amongst the ship's company, which Jones, by personal exertions, was able to stop ; but, naturally, no further attempt was made to use the rest of these guns.

But, more even than in armament, the *Serapis* was superior to the *Bonhomme Richard* in rate of sailing and handiness. She seems to have had it in her power to sail round her enemy and to weather on her at pleasure. Although she began the action to leeward, broadside to broadside, she presently shot ahead, and crossed the *Bonhomme Richard's* bows, passing to windward and raking her as she did so, then back again, again raking her. The advantage lay entirely with the *Serapis* which ought, beyond a doubt, to have won an easy victory. Captain Pearson was a brave man and a good seaman, but he was not equal to unwonted emergencies ; and when, after about an hour's engagement, Jones, finding the *Bonhomme Richard* seriously ill-treated by the heavier guns and superior sailing of the *Serapis* resolved to grapple with her, Pearson had not the tactical skill nor the presence of mind to prevent him or to free his ship.

It may be left an open question by what manœuvre Jones caught the *Serapis*. In their official reports, Jones said, and Pearson said, that the *Bonhomme Richard* being to windward, kept away, and so ran across the bows of the *Serapis* ; and these were the men in charge of the two ships at the time. On the other hand, Dale, who was in command of the *Bonhomme Richard's* main-deck, and could not possibly see what was being done, wrote in a private account that the *Serapis* 'wore short round on her heel,' and tried to pass astern of the *Bonhomme Richard* to rake her ; and

his statement, made in greater detail to Mr. Cooper, described the 'Serapis' as having been 'box-hauled,' an evolution now practically obsolete, but then in favour amongst short ships in smooth water. Except from a purely technical point of view, it is not of much consequence ; but the fact is certain that the jib-boom of the Serapis was caught in the starboard mizen rigging of the Bonhomme Richard ; that Jones, with his own hands, lashed it to the Bonhomme Richard's mizen-mast ; that the Serapis's starboard anchor hooked the Bonhomme Richard's quarter ; and that the two ships swung together bow and stern, their starboard sides touching each other.

Pearson, hoping that the Bonhomme Richard might drift apart, let go his other anchor ; but he did not know, and was probably unable to learn, how it was that the two ships were so closely locked : they swung together with the tide, setting to the north-west, and so continued.

In number of men the adversaries were nearly equal, but whilst the lower deck battery of the Serapis gave her an overpowering superiority below, it employed more men, and left the Bonhomme Richard with a marked superiority above. The 18-pounders of the Serapis smashed the Bonhomme Richard into chips, and silenced her main-deck guns ; but the men, thus driven on deck and to the tops, swept the quarter deck and forecastle of the Serapis with musketry and hand grenades, and drove her men below. There was some skirmishing below, through the ports ; some above, across the nettings ; but on neither side was there any organised attempt to board.

. Meantime the Alliance, which might, under the existing circumstances, have anchored athwart the stern of the Serapis, and, without danger to herself, have ended the action in a few minutes, contented herself with sailing round the two ships, firing indiscriminately at either or both, not only with round shot but with grape. Pearson in his report naturally speaks only of the damage he sustained from this fire; but American writers maintain that the loss which it inflicted on the Bonhomme Richard was much greater; and it seems well established that the material assistance rendered by the Alliance was worse than useless; though, of course, Pearson could not know that at the time, and her presence had a very positive and dispiriting effect.

Still, even under the disadvantageous circumstances in which the Serapis was placed, the crushing power of her 18-pounders against the rotten timbers of the Bonhomme Richard must, sooner or later, have ended matters in her favour, had not a singular accident, or rather the union of ingenious daring on one side and unpardonable carelessness on the other, changed the appearance of affairs about ten o'clock. A seaman of the Bonhomme Richard had laid out on the main-yard, carrying with him a bucket full of hand grenades. One of these he succeeded in throwing down the Serapis's main hatchway on to her lower deck. A number of cartridges had been placed there in the rear of the guns, and amongst these the grenade fell. The explosion ran from the mainmast aft, disabled many of the guns, and killed, wounded, or horribly scorched every man at them. The effect was disastrous, and for a minute it was debated whether the Serapis should not surrender.

But on board the *Bonhomme Richard* things were as bad. The carpenter came up to Jones and said the ship was sinking; the gunner hearing this ran aft to haul down the flag; but finding that the flagstaff and flag had already been shot away, began to bellow: 'Quarter! for God's sake, quarter!' till Jones stopped his noise by staving in his skull with the butt end of a pistol. Pearson, on this, attempted to board, but was repelled; a counter attempt by Jones' was also repelled. The master-at-arms of the *Bonhomme Richard*, hearing the carpenter's statement and the gunner's outcry, released the prisoners from the hold. More than a hundred of them rushed on deck; they might and should have rendered themselves masters of the ship, or at least have enabled their friends of the *Serapis* to do so, but they were bewildered and panic-stricken; Jones, with a presence of mind and an impudence that rises to the sublime, set them to work at the pumps, and at the pumps they continued. One only amongst them retained his self-possession, and escaping on board the *Serapis* through a port, told Captain Pearson the state the enemy was in. It was too late to be of any real use. Both ships were, in fact, thoroughly beaten, and it was almost a matter of chance which should give in. I believe the *Alliance* decided it. She had not assisted the *Bonhomme Richard* as she ought to have done; her fire had caused as much damage to friend as to foe, but she served to discourage the *Serapis*, and that discouragement was sufficient to turn the scale. About half-past ten the *Serapis* struck and was taken possession of. The *Bonhomme Richard* was with difficulty kept afloat through the night, and sank about ten o'clock the next

forenoon. There is no trustworthy return of killed and wounded; the numbers are said to have been about 200 on board the *Serapis*, 120 on board the *Bonhomme Richard*; but this is little better than a guess, and it is very probable that they were much larger: the accounts are widely different, rising to nearly 300 for each ship; and all that can be positively said is, that, as compared with the numbers engaged, it is the bloodiest combat on modern record.

Throughout the action, Jones's conduct as the captain of a ship of war is beyond all praise. His ship was in every way very inferior to the *Serapis*, and Pearson was a man of known courage and good repute. I do not think, though every American writer thinks, that Jones took the *Serapis*, not only single-handed, but against the treasonable assistance of Landais, in the *Alliance*. I think, though contrary to the position of every American writer, that it was the mere presence of the *Alliance* that determined the result. The presence of the *Pallas* was also not without effect. In this I think that Pearson's report is agreeable to common sense, untrammelled by national prejudice, if indeed national prejudice has anything to do with the matter. But, on the other hand, I think that it is impossible to overrate the ability, the pluck, the determination, and the presence of mind with which Jones fought and won the battle. The *Alliance* gave Pearson an excuse for striking his flag. It was Jones, Jones alone, rather than the *Bonhomme Richard*, who first beat him to a standstill.

The Countess of Scarborough was captured, the *Serapis* was captured; the convoy, valued at 600,000*l.*, was saved; the *Bonhomme Richard* was sunk, and Paul

Jones's cruise was of necessity ended. The court martial, held at Sheerness on 10 March, 1780, decided 'that Captains Pearson and Piercy, assisted by their officers and men, had not only acquitted themselves of their duty to the country, but had, in the execution of such duty, done infinite credit to themselves by a very obstinate defence against a very superior force.' Putting, too, the credit or discredit of the affair on one side, the material advantage was held to be in favour of England; and the statesmen of the time, the illustrious trio of the ballad, did not care to examine too critically into the rest. Neither did the merchants of London, whose merchandise was safe. They presented Pearson with a sword of honour; and the king knighted him. He was a decent, honest man, and had done his best; but his best was not what ought to have been rewarded. A government that wishes its officers to achieve impossibilities should not reward even the best intended failures. Jones's remark on hearing of it is characteristic and pardonable: 'Should I have the good fortune to fall in with him again, I'll make a lord of him.'

With the sinking of the *Bonhomme Richard*, leaving the conqueror, with his mongrel crew, afloat in the dismasted ship, the interest of Jones's career as affecting English naval history ends. Jones wished to go to Dunkirk, but his orders were to put into the Texel, and thither his colleagues insisted on his going. The ships lay there for some time, but as Sir Joseph Yorke, the English minister at the Hague, protested against their being admitted, asserting that Jones was a rebel and a pirate, the prizes flew French colours, and were afterwards bought in, at a low figure, by the French government.

: It is unnecessary to enter on any detailed account of Jones's stay at the Texel, of his taking the command of the Alliance, of his breaking the blockade established by the English squadron under Captain Reynolds, and of his passage to L'Orient. Neither will I more than mention his quarrels with Landaïs, with the mutinous crew of the Alliance, and with the commissioners at Paris. Franklin alone appears to have supported him; and as our information concerning the whole affair is based almost entirely on Jones's own reports, it is impossible to pronounce any decided opinion about it. Eventually Landaïs was restored to the command of the Alliance, sent to America, and retired from the service. He lived to an extreme old age, and to the last maintained that it was he, and not Jones, that captured the Serapis.

After hanging about the French court and Parisian society for some months, making love, as it would appear, in very indifferent verse to women of very indifferent morals, Jones was ordered to take the Ariel, a 20-gun ship lately captured from the English, across the Atlantic. He did not, however, sail till 18 December, 1780; and having in the course of his voyage interchanged shots one dark night with an unknown vessel, an English, or possibly an American, privateer, which his report magnified into a large English frigate, he arrived at Philadelphia on 18 February, 1781.

This was the end of his service in the American navy: there was either no command for him, or no willingness to entrust him with one. His deeds had been brilliant. His aptitude for command in actual fight was undoubted; but we may very well believe that

his aptitude for command under the every-day circumstances of long-continued cruising was seriously questioned. His whole service had been one prolonged quarrel with his subordinates, and it is impossible to suppose that everybody he had to deal with was always in the wrong, he himself always in the right. He was vain, greedy, and selfish. Whatever was done, he claimed the whole credit of it; and he is, perhaps, the one only instance of a commander of daring, skill, and good luck, who was always unpopular, whose men, in all ranks, were always on the verge of mutiny.

After the peace of 1783, Jones proposed to the American government to commission a large frigate, at once for the instruction of young officers, and to show the flag in European waters: he, of course, would be the proper person to command her, with the rank of rear-admiral. Congress did not see things quite in the same light, and Jones was not employed. He then, as none of the prize money due by the French government had yet been paid, volunteered to go to Paris and urge a settlement. His offer was accepted. He went to Paris, and after many delays, extending over nearly two years, and after much chicanery on the part of the French government and its agents, he did recover the money—181,000 livres. Of this sum Jones claimed 13,000 livres as his own share, but, in addition, he charged against the fund 48,000 livres as his expenses during the two years; and as he had the money in his own hands, he paid himself first.

Even his biographers have been unable to see in this that philosophic indifference to money of which he used to boast. The only excuse that he condescended to

make was that he had to go to court and to keep good society; that the ambassador, who did the same, was allowed 2,000*l.* a year, and that he therefore was certainly entitled to 2,000*l.* for two years. He professed great indignation that his claim should be questioned at all. 'The Board of Treasury,' he wrote, 'have been pleased, in their report, to treat me as a mere agent, though employed in that delicate concern. In France I was received and treated by the king and his ministers as a general officer and a special minister from Congress.' 'Eventually,' adds Captain Mackenzie, 'his claim was allowed, the fact of his having already received and disposed of the money contributing, no doubt, to narrow down and simplify the question.'

In 1787, after this business had been settled, he returned to America, and, a few months later, back again to Europe with a special but carefully defined mission to Copenhagen, to push the claim against the Danish government on account of the two prizes which Landais had sent into Bremen. These had been valued at 40,000*l.* There had been some negotiation at London and Paris about this, and the Danes had offered 10,000*l.*, but the offer had been refused. Jones was now sent as 'agent,' but with no power to settle anything without authority from the United States' minister at Paris, or to receive the money; and he was to be allowed for expenses five per cent. on whatever should be recovered. This, we may suppose, Jones thought paltry; and, as the Danish government found it inconvenient to pay up, it seems to have had no trouble in persuading Jones to accept the patent of a pension of 1,500 crowns, and say nothing more about it. Jones naturally kept his share in

this transaction secret; and when, after a year or two, the knowledge of it leaked out, he urged that the patent was given purely as a mark of esteem, and that the pension had never been paid. How much of this is true there are no means of knowing, and I am content to rest my opinion on the remark of Captain Mackenzie, that 'an awkward coincidence with regard to this pension is that it was dated on the very day that he agreed to suspend the negotiation and remove it to Paris.'

Meantime Jones had entered into a correspondence with the Russian government, and had agreed to take service in the Russian navy with the rank of rear-admiral. In April, 1788, he started from Copenhagen for St. Petersburg. He got easily enough as far as Stockholm; but as the sea was still partially frozen, he had some difficulty in getting farther, and it was only after an adventurous passage of four days in an open boat that he landed at Reval.

In Russia he remained for about a year, serving creditably enough for some months against the Turks; and being present, though having no active share in the decisive victory in the Liman on 7 June, 1788.¹ But as before with his subordinates, so now with his superiors, he could not agree. He was under the orders of Potemkin, with whom he speedily got up a quarrel. Potemkin was as vain as Jones, and had the advantage of uncontrolled power. Jones was therefore sent back to St. Petersburg, and while living there, very much in the shade, a charge was preferred against him of having committed a criminal assault on a little girl, twelve

¹ See *Dictionary of National Biography*, s.n. Samuel Bentham, iv. 282.

years old. It was possibly false : it certainly was never proved, nor was it insisted on ; and Jones was permitted to leave the country. He retired to Amsterdam, and seems to have entertained the idea of entering the service of Sweden : the negotiation fell through ; so also did his endeavours to return to Russia. He was anxious to fight somebody, but does not seem to have cared very much as to the flag he was under or opposed to. In the course of 1790 he went to Paris, where, on 18 July, 1792, he died of dropsy, induced or aggravated by disease of the liver.

The character of Paul Jones resolves itself very distinctly under two different heads—professional and moral. As a commander, Jones's merits and faults will sufficiently appear from the account I have given of his services. He was a man of distinguished talent and originality ; a thorough seaman, and of the most determined and tenacious courage. On the other hand, his vanity was excessive ; his desire for 'glory,' as he himself wrote, was 'infinite ;' and in aiming at it, he never hesitated to throw over the claims of all others. His life was thus spent in a never-ending series of squabbles, all more or less discreditable, with his subordinates, with his equals, with his superiors. The governments which he served showed their sense of his conduct by awarding him, in America, a gold medal ; in France, a sword of honour ; and in both, by not employing him again. His biographers have lamented that a man of his genius had not greater opportunities of distinction : If—they have argued—he had only had command of an efficient squadron, what might he not have done ! Judging from the invariably mutinous conduct of his men and officers,

we may doubt whether he could have held command of an efficient squadron.

His moral character may be summed up in one word—detestable. I do not here speak only of the great damning fact that, without sense of injury on the one side, or of affection on the other, but merely as a matter of vulgar self-interest, he waged war against his native country, although

‘—this alone might from his part
Sever each true and loyal heart.’

I speak equally of his character in its more personal relations. The same selfish vanity which made him a renegade, made him a calculating liar, incapable of friendship or love. He is said to have been free with his purse; his conduct relative to the Paris or Copenhagen prize money shows that he was unscrupulous in filling it. Whenever his private actions can be examined, they must be pronounced to be discreditable; and as to many others that appear to be so, there is no evidence in his favour, except his own unsubstantiated and worthless testimony.

But it is not specially to say this that I have written this chapter. So far as our country is concerned, the moral character of our enemy is a matter of indifference. The points of importance are his manner of carrying on war, and the probability of that being repeated. I have sufficiently described the first; I would urge the necessity of considering the second.

Many of our seaports, with shipping and warehouses far more valuable than any of 100 years ago, are still as utterly defenceless; nay, more so, for the offensive

powers of an enemy are increased enormously. Shoals and sandbanks will not stop a commander of skill and determination: even if every Englishman or Scotchman was of approved honesty, if there was none ready to sell his birthright for a mess of pottage, there are hundreds of Americans, Germans, Frenchmen, Russians, men of every nation in or out of Europe, who know the way into the Forth or the Tyne, the Clyde or the Mersey, just as well as do the local pilots. French pamphleteers have, within the last few years, revelled in the anticipation of the mischief that might be done to our undefended towns, with a minimum of cost or risk. Plans have been put forward for fitting a steam launch to squirt blazing petroleum over ships or buildings. With such a boat, incalculable damage might be done before the presence of an enemy was thought of; and I conceive there would be no difficulty in scattering liquid fire in a more destructive manner and from a much greater distance than by a squirt. We, threatened with such weapons, may pronounce them atrocious, illegal, monstrous; but the real question is not whether it is right to use such weapons, but whether there is a possibility of their being used. All history teaches that, in war, there is no such thing as an illegal weapon, if only it suits the convenience of the enemy. I have been endeavouring to show, from the story of the past, that we ought to be armed against the indefinite possibilities of the future.

CHAPTER XII.

*THE FRENCH PRIVATEERS.*IV. ROBERT SURCOUF.¹

THE gigantic development of modern commerce will necessarily give to its defence in time of war a more serious importance than it has ever yet had. That, by either belligerent, the enemy's commerce will be a principal object of attack may be assumed; in what particular way the attack may be made is supposed to be uncertain. The supposition seems, if not a mere pretence, to be based on ignorance of human nature and the custom of war. Can any sane person really believe that a future Napoleon—whatever his nationality—would be bound by the rules of a Declaration of Paris? or that, if it suited his purpose, he would scruple to declare the Declaration null and void? I cannot doubt that in future wars with a maritime country, the main fact of privateering will remain as in time past. The details may be modified; the form of commission may be different; but the absolute fact will be as heretofore. To what extent it may be carried will depend on the wealth and the trade, the power, ability, and moral scruples of the respective belligerents. So considered, we have, as very practical

¹ *United Service Magazine*, February and March, 1883.

questions, to discuss what effect such an attack is capable of producing, and what may be the best way of guarding against it.

Our forefathers, as is well known, gathered their merchant ships in large convoys under the escort of ships of war. It was a mode of proceeding distasteful to the one and irksome to the other. Naturally the officers of our ships of war did not like it, for it withdrew them from active, brilliant, or possibly lucrative enterprise, to a service on which the enemy was to be avoided rather than sought, on which dull safety was the aim, rather than glorious victory, and which, with a great deal of difficulty and vexation, brought with it small chance of distinction and none of emolument. And on the other hand, the masters of merchantmen, if they found themselves in a good ship, and had, as was commonly the case, a pecuniary interest in an early market, chafed under the delay which worse-sailing ships forced on them; and the delay was not always the fault of the ships; the ignorance and incompetence of some of the masters was as irritating and embarrassing as the undue eagerness, obstinacy, and inattention of others. It has therefore been assumed that in any future naval war the system of convoys will not be attempted.¹ Most certainly, naval officers will not be anxious that it should be. Whether the merchants, for whose benefit it was devised, may not be driven to a different opinion is a question which time alone can answer. But if not in convoys, how then is our commerce to be protected? Is it to

¹ See a paper by Rear-Admiral Colomb on *Convoys, are they any longer possible?* in the Journal of the Royal United Service Institution, 25 March, 1887.

protect itself? I believe the theory that it may do so is widely accepted, though the way in which it is to do so has never been satisfactorily explained; and though I read of merchant-ships carrying 40-pounders, or even heavier guns, and flying the blue ensign, I doubt very much whether the few guns, or the scanty, imperfectly-trained crew, would enable the blue ensign to fly long in the immediate presence of an enemy's ship of war. But I am not now going to dwell on my own personal doubts. I prefer examining into the historical antecedents of the theory; and, by seeing how far armed merchant-ships have, in former days, been able to defend themselves, forming some warranted opinion as to how far they may be able to do so in time to come.

Many hundred years ago, practical experience decided in favour of a permanent distinction between merchant-ships and ships of war; notwithstanding which, merchant-ships continued to be armed, chiefly as a defence against pirates and savages. Sometimes, however, the armament was spoken of as efficient against men-of-war; and was carried to such an extent that engagements with merchant-ships have been added to the roll of naval achievement. Notably has this been the case with the celebrated capture of the Acapulco ship by Commodore Anson. Every boy has read the story and admired the boldness with which the Centurion—her crew reduced by sickness and death—sailed from Macao to look for this gigantic adversary, of nearly double her tonnage, and with more than double her number of men: and not only to look for, but to find, to fight, and to capture. It may be well to instil into the boyish mind a belief that Englishmen are a match for double their number of

Spaniards, or of any other people ; it is a belief that has often led to very practical results : but in this particular instance, when we examine the story technically and critically, the consideration is forced on us that the *Centurion* was a man-of-war, and that—however big—the *Nuestra Señora de Covadonga* was only a merchant-ship ; as emphasizing which, it is well to look beyond the familiar account written by the commodore and his friends. This does indeed tell how the Spaniard had 67 men killed and 84 wounded, whilst on board the *Centurion* were only 2 killed and 17 wounded ; and remarks : ‘ of so little consequence are the most destructive arms in untutored and unpractised hands.’ This short comment is, however, not likely to catch the attention, or even be fully understood by the ordinary reader ; for the exact meaning of it we have to refer to the little-known narrative by Mr. Thomas, the ship’s schoolmaster, which, describing the *Covadonga*, says :—

‘ She had ports for mounting 64 guns, but had, I think, to the best of my remembrance, but 40, and was so lumbered that she could not fight all of them ; 17 of those were brass, I think all twelve-pounders, but no two of them alike, but I suppose picked up here and there at different times as they could procure them. . . . Her defensive weapons were swords and cutlasses, poleaxes, and a dangerous sort of pike, the wood handle of which was about seven foot long and headed with a double-edged iron about eighteen inches long, very sharp, and which alone was enough to destroy all the men who should enter on the nettings, or to push back those who might attempt to enter in any other parts . but I fancy they were in so much haste and hurry that they forgot most of these below ; for we afterwards found many of them in the gun-room, a place where they could be of no manner of

service. . . . Though indeed it appears that the general was really very confident of success and expressed himself after that manner before the fight to some of his officers . . . it would never bear to charge him with not clearing^a the guns between decks, they being so lumbered that it would have been morally impossible for him to have got them clear in three times the time he had for it from the first sight he had of us to the time of the engagement. Indeed what I think they might very justly and with the most reason imaginable call him to a strict account for, was his not endeavouring to get away from us at first.' ¹

And yet this Covadonga was a half-and-half-sort of craft; was a government ship, regularly commissioned, and entitled to fly the royal standard. She was, however, a Spaniard; and there are many amongst us who would fain believe that the victory was won by Englishmen over Spaniards, rather than by a man-of-war over a merchantman. I propose, therefore, in more fully inquiring into this question, to eliminate, or indeed to reverse the supposed advantage of nationality; and to do this, by tracing, in some detail, the history of privateering in the Indian seas during the last great war with France, and in following out the career of a certain Captain Surcouf, with whose name few English readers are perhaps now acquainted, but who, some eighty years ago, was a very real power in the eastern seas, and whose memory still lives in France as the one bright spot in a time of deep naval gloom. *

Robert Surcouf² may be properly enough described

¹ *A True and Impartial Journal of a Voyage to the South Seas and round the Globe in His Majesty's Ship Centurion*, by Pascoe Thomas, Teacher of the Mathematics on board the Centurion (1745); pp. 288-290. The book has never been reprinted, and is now scarce.

² So far as the French side of his career is concerned, I base my

as a privateer by birth. A native of St. Malo, the chosen home of French privateers, he was descended, on the mother's side, from a grand-uncle of Du Guay-Trouin: on the father's side, he was the great-grandson of an earlier Robert Surcouf, a contemporary of Trouin's, and himself also a daring and successful cruiser. He was born on 12 December, 1773; and after a childhood distinguished—we are told—by a high-couraged fondness for fighting, for tearing his clothes, and for kicking his schoolmaster's shins, he was sent to sea in March, 1789, on board the *Aurore*, a merchant-ship bound to the East Indies, and trading at first between Mauritius and the coast of India. In the following February she took in a cargo of negroes for the West Indies; but she had scarcely left her port before she got into a storm—a pre-scientific cyclone—which dashed her on the African shore. The crew, and the black women with their children, who were unfettered, were saved; but it was found impossible to release the four hundred wretches chained below, and they perished to the last man: the hull was thrown up on the beach, and seemed capable of being repaired; but it was a full fortnight before the fearful mass of putrefaction could be cleared out. In the loathsome task, young Surcouf came to the front by his energy and courage; and when the captain chartered a

narrative principally on the *Histoire de Robert Surcouf, Capitaine de Corsaire, publiée d'après des documents authentiques*. par Ch. Cunat. The author claims also to have gained much of his information firsthand, from Surcouf himself or the companions of his voyages; and, judging by a close scrutiny of the leading facts, I have come to the conclusion that he has not been purposely untruthful, though he has written throughout in a spirit of almost grotesque exaggeration not perhaps uncommon in the lower class of French historians.

country vessel to carry part of his crew to the Mauritius, he took the lad with him as his chief officer. By what series of accidents it does not appear, but the crazy and ill-found boat was driven far to the eastward; after great suffering for want of water and provisions, they made the coast of Sumatra; and so, after a three months' voyage, got to Penang, or, as it was then more commonly called by the English, Prince of Wales Island. From there they took a passage to Pondicherry in a French merchant-ship, and finally arrived at Mauritius, towards the middle of December. For some months longer Surcouf continued with his old captain, as chief officer of a brig trading to Madagascar. The school of seamanship was rude, but, we may believe a thoroughly good one; and when, towards autumn, the lad, not yet eighteen, made up his mind to return to France, and shipped on board the corvette *Bienvenue*, he was rated as quartermaster (*timonier*), and served as such during the homeward voyage. She was put out of commission at L'Orient, on 3 January, 1792.

After a few months at home, Surcouf was off again to Mauritius, chief officer of a vessel which would seem to have been engaged partly in the slave-trade, until the war with England broke out, when the blockade of the island drove him on board a corvette equipped by the governor, who gave him the local rank of ensign. M. Cunat implies, rather than asserts, that he continued in this employment for more than a year, and had his small part in the engagement on 22 October, 1794, between the French squadron *Cybèle* and *Prudente*, large frigates, with the *Coureur*, brig, and the *Jean Bart*, privateer, and, on the other side, the two English ships, *Centurion* of 50,

and Diomede of 44 guns; an engagement in which the Centurion received such damage as to be obliged to withdraw from the station, taking with her also the Diomede. Although not quite so heroic, so Curtius-like, as Cunat describes it—for the forces were not so utterly disproportioned—the affair was, 'no doubt, as creditable to the French as it was the reverse to the English;' but leaving that on one side, there seems no clear reason for supposing that Surcouf had anything to do with it. We may believe that if he had, his future career would have been very different; not impossible, more distinguished; and we may be quite sure that if his biographer could have adduced one jot of evidence of his being in any one of the ships, he would have described him as the hero of the day. It seems to me more probable that the young man's service on board the ship of war—whichever it was—was short; that the constraint and discipline of even a colonial and revolutionary ship was irksome to him, and that he got out of her at the first opportunity.

It is at any rate quite certain that shortly after this he was busy carrying slaves from Africa to Bourbon, or rather Réunion, a traffic which, in February, 1794, the Republic had pronounced illegal and contrary to the rights of man. It was, however, profitable; and to young Surcouf the chance of breaking the law and oppressing the nigger was a further inducement. The colonists wanted slaves; the making them contraband raised the price; the smuggling required and remunerated daring, and the unholy trade went on briskly for some months. At length the attention of the colonial

¹ See James's *Naval History* (edit. 1860), I. 236.

government was called to the continued malpractices of M. Surcouf in the brig *Créole*; and orders were given, both in the Isle of France and in Réunion, to arrest him. The news reached him as he was taking in a cargo in Madagascar; but none the less he ran his slaves, landed them by night at Grande Chaloupe, on the west side of Réunion, and stood, impudently enough, into St. Paul's Bay, where he anchored at daybreak. His people were still busy removing the traces of negro occupation, when three police agents came on board. They were earlier than was expected, and had no difficulty in finding sufficient proof of the business the *Créole* had been upon. It was a new and very flagrant breach of the law; and as they drew up their report, they told Surcouf he must accompany them on shore. 'Quite at your service, citizens,' said the young captain, with the blandest courtesy; 'but the cook is just bringing aft the breakfast which I hope you will do me the pleasure of taking before we go.' The invitation was accepted, and the party went down to the cabin; Surcouf, in a few hasty words, leaving his chief mate in charge.

The breakfast was good; the wine was excellent; and the guests enjoyed themselves without thought of the future, or of their host's probable anxieties; whilst on deck, the chief mate, having sent the officers' boat on shore, quietly cut the cable and made sail to seaward. It was not till the *Créole* got out of the bay and felt the swell of the south-east wind, that the officers below had any idea of what was going on. They rushed on deck, and saw their position with dismay. Realising that under existing circumstances their host was not a

man to stick at trifles, they ordered him to return instantly, threatening him with the terrors of the legislature; to which Surcouf replied that just to keep clear of these he was going to carry them over to Africa and put them on shore amongst their dear friends the negroes. And so he left them to their own reflections. As the day wore on, they lost sight of land: the brig, under small sail, rolled heavily in the swell, and they were extremely sea-sick.

Night came on, with the horrors of darkness; the wind blew fresh and they fancied it a storm; they were excessively miserable—miserable enough in the present, still more miserable as to the future when they could bring themselves to think of it. So, in very humble spirit, they entered into a negotiation with their master, and were able to come to terms. They were to write a new report to the effect that they had found no trace of negroes on board the *Créole*; that she had none of the marks of a slaver, and that she had been forced out to sea by the rollers setting in. Surcouf, on his part, agreed to put them on shore; but not to let them off too easily, carried them to the Isle of France, where he landed them eight days later, and where, thanks to the complicity, or, as M. Cunat calls it, the good-will (*bienveillance*) of three most respectable and deservedly influential men, members of council, he escaped the penalties to which his nefarious traffic had properly subjected him.

He did not, however, care to tempt fortune again in this particular way; and the course of the war seemed to offer him a more honourable as well as more lucrative path. He accepted the command of a vessel of 180 tons

fitting out as a privateer. Her name was *Modeste*, and her equipment was conformable; she carried four guns—6-pounders, and thirty men. The name could be changed and she became the *Emilie*; but her armament was unaltered, being probably limited by the means or credit of her owners. The colonial government refused her a letter of marque, thinking her, perhaps, too contemptible, and wishing rather to concentrate the forces of the island. Much to Surcouf's disgust, he had to sail as a peaceful trader to the Seychelles for turtle; and left Port North-West, as the republicans had named Port Louis, on 3 September, 1795. It is a date that marks the beginning of Surcouf's career.

Whether Surcouf had already made up his mind to go privateering, with or without a letter of marque, or whether he was purely the child of circumstance, may seem doubtful; he certainly went to the Seychelles, and lying in the roadstead of Mahé, began taking in his cargo. By chance, or otherwise, he had also received on board a number of sailors who were scattered amongst the islands and wanted a passage to the Isle of France, when one afternoon—it was 7 October—two large English ships were seen making for the anchorage. They may have been men-of-war; it suited Surcouf to think they were, and cutting his cables, he went out on one side as they came in on the other. He concluded that as the English had made the Seychelles their cruising ground, it was unsafe for him to return, and that he was free to go in quest of adventure. The quest led him over to the neighbourhood of the Andaman Islands and the coast of Sumatra, sailing, according to his biographer, in an aimless kind of way for three months, and

once only interrupted by an English wood-boat, which had the impertinence to fire on him as a summons to bring to, and which, purely in self-defence, he was obliged to take possession of, and send to the Isle of France. The fact is, of course, that he was cruising: having no licence or letter of marque, he was, in point of law, a pirate; and his having provisions for this lengthened time at sea, with an increased crew, is presumptive evidence that the whole thing was predetermined.

Having taken his first step with the wood-boat, the rest came naturally. A few days later, he met, off the Sandheads, two vessels laden with rice, in charge of a pilot brig; he had no difficulty in making himself master of all three; sent the two rice-ships and the *Emilie* to the Isle of France, and transported himself with the remainder of his crew, twenty-three in number, on board the pilot brig, which is spoken of as the *Cartier*, and which appeared better suited for his purpose than his former ship. After another week he captured another rice-ship, the *Diana*, and having put a prize crew on board her, resolved to accompany her to the Isle of France. He was proceeding to carry this into effect, when standing over to the Orissa coast, he caught sight of the Company's ship *Triton*, lying in Balasur Roads. She was a vessel of 800 tons, and is described, with perhaps not very much exaggeration, as mounting 26 twelve-pounders on her main deck, and as having on board 150 men. As compared with the *Cartier*, she was, very literally, a 'Triton among the minnows.' On board the *Cartier*, reinforced by all the available men from the *Diana*, there were nineteen, exclusive of a few, perhaps

half-a-dozen, Lascars from the different prizes ; but the Cartier's appearance favoured a surprise, and with his people all hidden from view, the Lascars only showing, and himself steering, Surcouf ran down to the big ship. The officers and passengers were at dinner ; in the heat of the afternoon most of the crew were probably asleep ; the careless watch took for granted that the brig was, as she looked, the expected pilot-boat, and thought nothing more about it till they suddenly found her alongside, and the Frenchmen, armed with pistol and cutlass, jumping on board. Of defence, in the strict sense of the word, there was none. The few who made any opposition were at once killed ; the others were thrown down the hatchways, and the hatches clapped on ; the halliards of the port-lids were cut, so that the ports could not be opened ; and the English were virtually prisoners between decks. A few volleys of musketry down the main hatchway anticipated an attempt to blow up the quarter-deck ; a little desultory firing from the poop windows was easily quelled, and with the loss of one man killed and one wounded, the Frenchmen were masters of the ship. The loss of the English was greater, but small compared to what it might have been had resistance been possible. The captain, a midshipman, one of the passengers—a soldier officer, and two seamen, five in all, were killed, and six wounded ; the prisoners were put on board the Diana and allowed to make the best of their way. The little Cartier was recaptured off Madras by the English 74-gun ship Victorious ; but the Triton, under the command of Surcouf, was carried safely to Mauritius.

As a bit of privateering—which the English, if it had

failed, would rightly have called piracy—the capture of the Triton seems to me really very clever, though the heroics in which M. Cunat indulges are of course utterly out of place. ‘At the sight of the English,’ he says, ‘at the recollection of their country, these eighteen heroes chose rather to die than to dishonour themselves by cowardly surrender.’ There was no question of either dying or surrendering, if they had not thought fit to attack: the Triton would certainly not have begun. ‘This ship’—the words are attributed to Surcouf—‘this ship shall be our tomb, or the cradle of our glory.’ I don’t suppose for a moment that he said anything of the sort; I think he most probably put the case very plainly and truthfully before his eighteen men; that his words were somewhat like:—‘Here’s a fine fat Indiaman with a hold full of dollars and rupees. It’s all ours, if you’ll make a dash: most of her men are asleep, and those that aren’t will think we’re the pilot. Only remember if they should overcome us, they’ll hang us as pirates.’ But whilst I think that M. Cunat’s description of the combat is absurd, I am bound to say that the one which was published at the time in England is entirely false, and self-contradictory. According to the ‘Gentleman’s Magazine’ for June, 1796—

‘The Triton was seized by a party of Frenchmen in a schooner which had been captured a few days before by the Modeste, French privateer. The whole number did not exceed twenty-five, who, it was proved, had broken their parole, escaped from Calcutta in a dingey, and contrived to get possession of the pilot schooner, under which description they were permitted to come alongside the Triton. The moment they had boarded her they killed every person who had the

misfortune to be upon deck. Those who unfortunately fell victims to the treachery of these savages were, &c. &c.'

How the pilot boat, schooner, or brig was 'captured by the *Modeste* and got possession of by the dingey, does not appear; and for the rest, the men had, as I have narrated, come there fairly enough. Their attack was a legitimate surprise, and they do not seem to have acted as savages, or to have killed more than the circumstances rendered justifiable and necessary. It is said, too, on independent authority, that the prisoners were kindly and liberally dealt with; that they were allowed to take their private property with them on board the *Diana*, and that some ladies, passengers, were treated with great politeness.¹

When *Surcouf* arrived at the Isle of France, he was excessively disgusted to find that the government claimed his prizes—the wood-boat, the rice-ships, and, above all, the *Triton*—on the simple ground that he had no letter of marque. About the law of the case there could be no doubt; it was in France the same as in England, and in England the prizes would have unquestionably been droits of admiralty. If a merchant-ship, being attacked, should capture her assailant, the government claim might properly be waived in her favour; but in the case of the *Emilie*, cleared for the Seychelles, and making prizes off the Sandheads, there seemed no reason why the law should not take its course.

The owners complained loudly. They had flattered themselves they had fallen on a good thing, and were pro-

¹ *Madras Courier*, 9 and 10 February, 1796, quoted by M. Cunat. I have not been able to verify the reference, but see no reason to doubt its correctness.

proportionally disappointed. They asserted that the prizes had been taken for the public benefit, that the arrival of the rice-ships had saved the island from famine; that the colony owed a debt of gratitude to Surcouf and themselves. 'It is,' they wrote, 'with the most lively grief that we learn that in place of those sentiments of gratitude which the conduct and success of the *Emilie* ought to give rise to, the ship is, on the contrary, threatened with confiscation, and deprived of the fruit of her captures, because she was not provided with a commission for cruising. . . . We hope that the colony may be spared the pain of seeing those who have saved it from distress now punished and ruined.' This remonstrance, however, produced no effect. Public opinion on the island, and several of the leading members of the government declared in favour of the *Emilie*; but the law was implacable; on which account Surcouf determined to carry his cause to France, and plead it before the nation. The home government took a friendly view of the case; poor as they were, it was of more consequence to encourage maritime enterprise than to enrich the treasury with the spoil; and the prizes, or the amount they had realised, were ordered to be made over to the owners, officers, and ship's company of the *Emilie*. It was found that they had been sold nominally for 1,700,000 livres, which, reduced to cash, was valued at 660,000 livres, and this was the sum that Surcouf would seem finally to have received.

The decision, however, had taken time. Before it was settled, fourteen months had slipped away, part of which time Surcouf had occupied in making love to a townswoman, Mlle. Marie Blaize, and part in super-

intending the equipment of the ship *Clarisse*, of Nantes, the command of which, as a privateer, had been offered to him. When his lawsuit was happily ended, and the ship ready to sail, he decided, apparently, that his marriage might wait, and he put to sea towards the end of July, 1798; the *Clarisse* carrying 14 guns, eight- and twelve-pounders, and having a crew of 140 good men of Nantes, or St. Malo, with Nicolas Surcouf, her captain's elder brother, as chief officer.

After a quick run to the line, he fell in there with a large English ship, which mounted, it is said, 26 guns, 22 of them on a main deck; a merchant-ship, no doubt; well armed, and possibly an Indiaman, but, if so, not under the Company's flag.¹ Possibly she trusted to her strength, possibly she did not recognise her danger until it was too late for her to avoid the *Clarisse*'s attack. She defended herself stoutly, and after a sharp fight, succeeded in beating her off, shooting away her fore topmast, and so left her. To the *Clarisse* 'there remained,' according to M. Cunat, 'from this terrible struggle, nothing but the glory of having seen the Jack of the three United Kingdoms fly before our victorious flag.' The privateer would, no doubt, rather have had the gold than the glory; and to the merchant-ship to escape was a full measure of success. But even in his sorry brag, M. Cunat is incorrect; for in 1798, Ireland was not represented in the Jack, and the *three* kingdoms were not united.

Off Rio Janiero, the *Clarisse* had a little compensation,

¹ As the flag, like the Company, is now a thing of the past, there are many who will not know that it differed from the flag of ordinary merchant-ships in having a striped field, red and white, resembling in this the flag of the United States of America. It was colloquially known as 'the Company's Gridiron.'

capturing a brig, which was sold at Bourbon for 400,000 francs; and on 5 December, she herself arrived at the Mauritius. After refitting, Surcouf went for a cruise in the Bay of Bengal; and in the Bay of Soosoo, on the coast of Sumatra, he found two English ships at anchor, taking in a cargo of pepper. A shoal prevented his running them on board at once. In number of guns they were superior; and it was no part of his policy to batter or be battered more than necessary. After a sharp cannonade, the larger of the two was carried by the *Clarisse's* boats, commanded by Nicolas Surcouf, who, at the head of 40 men, boarded her in the smoke. The other cut, and tried to run herself ashore, but was intercepted by the *Clarisse*, and captured. 'It was a brilliant feat of arms,' says Cunaat, 'in which our flag had triumphed over an enemy of superior force.' I repeat such expressions, not because they are true, not because they are not absurd; but because English writers have often been guilty of similar exaggerations; and English newspapers daily describe petty skirmishes, afloat or ashore, in terms that would be ridiculous if applied to Trafalgar or Waterloo.

Short and unequal as the combat had been, the *Clarisse* had suffered considerably in hull, spars, and rigging, and Surcouf determined to accompany his prizes to the Isle of France, and there refit. Having done this, he again put to sea, on 16 August, 1799, and presently stretched over to his old cruising ground on the coast of Java or Sumatra, where, on 1 October, he picked up a Dane, neutral as to her flag, but English as to her cargo: he sent her to the Isle of France. A Swede that he next fell in with had better fortune, being outward bound from

Stockholm with a Swedish cargo. A Portuguese vessel, with 116,000 dollars on board in hard cash, paid the penalty for the English alliance; after which the *Clarisse*, turning northwards into the Bay of Bengal, captured a country ship off Madras; and on 10 November another, the *Auspicious*, a large vessel mounting 20 guns, on the Orissa coast. From this time onwards she seems virtually to have blockaded Calcutta, cruising off the Sandheads in the most persistent and audacious manner. Early on the morning of 30 December, however, having chased an American ship in shore, she was espied by the *Sybille* frigate, then lying at single anchor, which immediately weighed and put to sea in chase. The wind was light and the weather hazy, but slowly and steadily the frigate gained on the privateer. The *Clarisse's* case appeared desperate, and Surcouf resorted to extreme measures—eight of her guns he hove overboard, and all her spare spars and booms; started and pumped out a quantity of her water; eased off the lanyards of the shrouds and backstays; knocked away the stanchions of the decks, and struck out the wedges of the masts—measures which gave the ship an incredible elasticity, and which, in a very light breeze dying away to an almost perfect calm, enabled the *Clarisse* gradually to increase her distance. By midnight she was lost in the darkness; being further to seaward, she probably had more wind, and was pushing under a press of sail to the southward, while the *Sybille* was lying becalmed, with her head all round the compass; and thus, when day dawned, she had run her pursuer clean out of sight.¹ We may suppose that

¹ Cunat describes this chase as having begun after dark on the 30th, and as having continued all that night, all the next day, and into the

31 December was spent in bringing her back, so far as possible, to her proper trim and condition. On the next day she captured the *Jane*, a ship laden with rice for Bombay. The capture of the *Jane* does not, in itself, differ from the capture of many other armed ships which were quite unequal to sustain the attack of a regularly-equipped ship of war, even if only a privateer; it differs only in this, that I have been fortunate enough to obtain a copy of a letter¹ written on 8 January by the *Jane's* master to her owners, giving a detailed account of the circumstances attending on her loss, and which is most interesting as evidence concerning this special, perhaps extinct phase of maritime war.

' You will no doubt be surprised to receive a letter from me dated at Bembelpatam (? Bimlpatam), but such is the fortune of war. We were captured by the *Clarissa*, French privateer, M. Surcouf, commander, on 1 January, after a very respectable defence for a country ship. But that you may have a clear view of our proceedings, I will begin my narrative from the 30th ult. On the morning of that day we passed through Saugor Roads; and in a few hours after, we joined the Honourable Company's ships *Manship* and *Lansdowne*, bound to Negapatam and Madras. In the afternoon a boat from the American ship *Mount Vernon* came alongside of all the ships, the officer of which informed us that they had been chased the day before by a French privateer mounting 18 guns, but had happily been relieved by the *Sybille* frigate, who pursued the privateer out of the roads.² This information

second night—the night of the 31st: but on this question of date I have preferred following the *Sybille's* log.

¹ P. R. C.—Admiral's Despatches, East Indies, No. 11.

² There is here a strange confusion of dates. 'The day before' is 29 December; Cunat puts the chase of the American through the night of the 30th and all through the 31st; but from the *Sybille's* log it is quite certain that she weighed anchor on the 30th, at 8 a.m.

determined me to keep company with the Indiamen two or three degrees to the southward of Point Palmyras, conceiving them to be a very sufficient protection against privateers. On the 31st, at 7 a.m., the pilot left us, Point Palmyras bearing W.byS. 27 leagues. We pursued our course to the S.W. in company. Between 7 and 8 o'clock we were spoke by H.M.S. Sybille returning from the chase of the privateer. Throughout the night we had moderate winds from the eastward. At daylight on 1 January, the Indiamen were five or six miles ahead. At the same time we saw a strange sail to the windward, standing to the northward, who, on perceiving us, bore down with great caution, because, as M. Surcouf afterwards told me, he took one of the ships to be either the Sybille or Nonsuch¹ seeing the other two ships safe into the sea. When I saw the strange sail altered her course, I took it for granted that she was the privateer which the American had given intelligence of, and immediately ordered a gun to be fired as a signal to the Indiamen. We continued the signal till about 8 o'clock. When the privateer saw that the ships ahead paid no attention to our firing, she hoisted English colours, up studding-sails and royals, and came on with more confidence. At half-past 8 she gave us a shot, hauled down the English colours, and hoisted the French national flag. We returned her fire from a 6-pounder which we got down off the deck into a stern port in the great cabin, at the same time carrying every sail after the Indiamen, anxiously hoping that the continual firing would bring them to our assistance; but we looked in vain, for they never made the smallest movement to assist us.

' At 9, the privateer having got very near us, they began to fire grape shot from the two brass 36-pounder cohorns, which they had mounted forward. At this time it came on a light squall from the southward, which brought the Indiamen directly to windward of us. During the squall we carried a press of sail, and the firing ceased on both sides. The superior

¹ Some other ship was meant: the Nonsuch was not on the station.

sailing of the privateer soon brought her up again, when she commenced a smart fire of musketry and grape shot from one of the 36-pounder colorns, the other having been disabled early in the action. At 11 our powder was wholly expended, the last gun we fired being loaded with musket cartridges. The Frenchman then prepared to board us; they triced up graplins to their main and foreyard arms, and Surcouf gave orders to board, animating his men with a promise of liberty to plunder. Seeing that we were incapable of resisting the force that was ready to be thrown on board of us, I was under the necessity of ordering the colours to be hauled down, and we were taken possession of by an officer from the *Clarissa*, formerly mounting 18 guns, but now no more than nine 4-pounders, one 9-pounder, and 2 colorns already mentioned. She has likewise several bell-mouthed blunderbusses in each top, which we saw them sending down after we were on board. Her reduced force is owing to her being chased by the *Sybil* frigate. At that time she threw overboard four 12-pounders, three 9-pounders, with their carriages, and all the spars; sawed through a bulkhead which runs across abaft the mainmast and separates the officers from the crew; knocked down all her stanchions, and got the axes and saws up to cut off the poop, when unfortunately it fell little wind, and they found they could save themselves without having recourse to this last resource.¹

‘The crew consists of M. Surcouf, his brother, four officers and a surgeon, sixty Europeans of several nations, ten Kaffirs, eleven Lascars, and a Serang, who entered when he took the *Albion*, and a few Malays. Surcouf sent on board the prize one officer, by trade a tailor, sixteen Frenchmen, and ten Lascars; they were employed until sunset shifting the prisoners and refitting the rigging. All this time the Indians were in sight to the S.W. At sunset, Surcouf, viewing them from the poop, requested I would tell him, upon my

¹ I repeat this here as a measure of the trustworthiness of Cunat notwithstanding some mistakes, and much absurd *chauvinisme*.

honour, whether they were Indiamen or not. I repeated what I had said, that they were two Company's ships, with whom I had kept company ever since we left the pilot. He replied they were two Tritons, alluding to the easy capture which he made of that ship, and said the commanders deserved to be shot. This was the universal opinion of the French officers. I fear their conduct will be attended with bad consequences to the Honourable Company's ships, as it has given the Frenchmen a very contemptible opinion of them, and will subject them to many attacks, which a spirited behaviour would have freed them from. The prize made sail about 7 p.m., steering S.S.E., and was accompanied by the privateer until daylight on the 2nd, when they parted, the privateer steering to the westward, and the prize continuing her course. On the 4th, we fell in with a Pariah snow, from Bengal, bound to Madras, which the privateer brought to, took out all her bales, 40 bags of rice, two bales of twine, a coir cable, and a chest of sugar-candy, and then put the crew of the Jane on board her, together with the second officer of the Auspicious—a very rich prize which he captured about seven weeks ago, bound from Bengal to Bombay, loaded with 4,000 bags of rice, 500 bags of sugar, and 375 bales of piece goods. We landed at Bemblepatam yesterday, from whence I have written you these particulars. Surcouf does not mean to come any more near the Sandheads, being very much afraid of the Sybille and Nonsuch; but intends to cruise in the latitude of 19° or 20°; and should he be joined by La Constance, as he expects, the trade of Bengal will be entirely cut off, until they have surfeited themselves with prizes, and return to the Mauritius to recruit their crews.'

This letter is a very remarkable voucher for M. Cunat's general good faith. The capture of the Auspicious and the Jane, which he miscalls James—the seizure of the Pariah snow, a native coasting vessel—and the chase by the Sybille, are all described in

essentially the same manner by the two widely different writers. It is also evidence that there was nothing exceptionally brutal in the behaviour of Surcouf and his men. Plunder, of course, was their main object, but the captain of the *Jane* has nothing to tell of any gross ill-usage; on the contrary, he implies that Surcouf's behaviour towards himself was friendly, and that the prisoners as a body were fairly well treated. On one point only are our two authorities in apparent contradiction: on the composition of the *Clarisse's* crew. On leaving France they were, according to Cunat, a specially fine body of French seamen; on capturing the *Jane* they were, according to the *Jane's* captain, a miscellaneous gathering of the nations. The discrepancy is only apparent, for, counting only her present cruise, the *Clarisse* had sent away many men in prizes, from which she had probably enough entered others in their place; Danes, Portuguese, Swedes, Irish, even English, had all come before her, just as much as the *Lascars* or Malays more particularly mentioned. As to the statement that the officer who took charge of the *Jane* was a tailor by trade, its rigid accuracy cannot now be gauged; it may have been the writer's way of saying that he differed from him in some details of seamanship; on the other hand, he may have been the purser or the master-at-arms. We may at any rate assume, as beyond controversy, that on board a ship which cruised, as the *Clarisse* did, on an enemy's coast for six months, and that, apparently, without even carrying away a spar, the executive officers were sailors, whether they were also tailors or not.

On the day after he had disembarrassed himself of

his prisoners, Captain Surcouf fell in with two large American¹ ships, sailing in company. They mounted each some 16 carronades, and confident in their strength, closed, one astern of the other, and stood on under easy sail. Against such an armament the *Clarisse*, with all her biggest guns at the bottom of the sea, could do little. Surcouf saw at once that his only chance was to board, and went straight at the sternmost of the two. His jib-boom caught in her main shrouds, and was broken off, but it served as a bridge by which Nicolas Surcouf and some 30 men gained the American's deck, and carried her without much trouble. Her consort fled; the *Clarisse* attempted to pursue, but having already lost her jib-boom, she carried away her fore topmast, and the chase escaped. With her armament, and in the disabled state of her pursuer, the American might have chosen her distance, and, avoiding being laid on board, have pounded the *Clarisse* into submission. But fighting was not her trade, and even 16 carronades of large bore did not convert a merchant-ship into a man-of-war.

His damage, however, and the heavy drain on his ship's company, decided Surcouf to return to the Isle of France, and he anchored at Port North-West (Louis) in the early days of February. He had no wish to stay idle, and as the *Clarisse* was in need of a thorough refit, he accepted the offer of the *Confiance*, a remarkably fine ship—one of the wonders of the sea, says M. Cunat—which had just come out from France. His brother

¹ There was not at this time declared war between France and the United States, but there was much angry feeling, and their ships mutually preyed on each other. Cf. Brenton's *Naval History*, II. 185, 187.

Nicolas would seem, about the same time, to have taken command of the *Adèle*, a small vessel mounting 12 guns, and in her to have gone a-cruising on his own account, but with what success I know not. Cunat makes no mention of this chapter in Nicolas's career, so all I can say regarding it is that it was rudely stopped by his falling in the way of the English sloop *Albatross* on the night of 12 November, 1800.

In the story of *Surcouf* the *Clarisse* has no more place. Under another captain she sailed again, when refitted, made one valuable prize—a ship from London to Calcutta, which had been insured for 60,000*l.*; but after this, changing her cruising ground to the Gulf of Aden and the upper part of the Arabian Sea was, about the middle of August, herself picked up by the 50-gun ship *Leopard*, carrying the flag of Rear-Admiral Blankett, on his way from the Red Sea to Bombay.

Surcouf had meantime transformed the *Confiance* from a merchant ship into a privateer. It was the middle of April before the necessary work was completed. When ready, the ship was a model of beauty and symmetry; and, painted black, with her upper works straw colour, would appear lower in the water and more 'varmint' like. She mounted 18 guns. Her crew was made up of 160 Europeans, 25 volunteers from the Bourbon militia, and some negro servants, about 200 in all. During the south-west monsoon the Bay of Bengal was neither a safe nor an advantageous cruising ground, and *Surcouf's* first idea was to establish himself in the Straits of Sunda, and off Batavia. He found, however, that station occupied by the American frigate *Essex*, whose immediate neighbourhood might, he judged,

be disagreeable, so he drew back, and having watered at the Seychelles, cruised for a while off the south-east end of Ceylon, from Dondra Head to the Little Basses, by which all ships for Madras or Calcutta, whether from Bombay or Europe, must needs pass.

The place was no doubt well chosen, though it was one where he was almost as likely to find an English frigate as an English merchant ship. He was chased more than once, and though the fast sailing of the *Confiance* saved her, he got disgusted with the station, which, by the fortune of war, had given him nothing but danger. He preferred to risk the chance of bad weather in the Bay, where the luck immediately changed, and he made several captures in rapid succession. Fourteen ships are reported as having fallen, about this time, either to the *Confiance* or to a fellow-cruiser, the *Malartic*. The largest and richest of all was the Company's ship *Kent*, from England for Calcutta, which, at the very end of her voyage was, on 7 October, 1800, met by the *Confiance*. The result of the meeting was described by the Bengal correspondent of the 'Gentleman's Magazine,' under date 8 October.

With great concern we announce the capture of the *Kent*, East Indiaman, yesterday, in the Bay of Bengal, off the Sandhead, by the *Confiance*, French privateer, of 26 guns, and 250 men, after an obstinate engagement of nearly one hour forty-five minutes, in which Captain Rivington was unfortunately killed, bravely defending the Company's property till the last moment of his existence, when he exclaimed, 'Do not give up the ship!'¹ Mr. Cator, a free merchant, also fell,

¹ Thirteen years, it may be remarked, before Lawrence rendered these words classical for Americans. They are surely more noble and

covered with wounds. The Kent was in 25 fathoms, and took the *Confiance* for a pilot sloop. The crew of the *Confiance* were all armed with sabres and pistols, and had been thrice encouraged with liquor previously to their boarding, after which the fight continued desperate for twenty minutes. General St. John and his family were on board the Kent, and appear to have been particularly unfortunate: all his jewels, plate, and baggage had been burnt on board the Queen; and he was now almost destined to behold his lovely wife, daughter to the Margravine of Anspach, and his three charming daughters, victims to the lawless excesses of a savage banditti. The gallant Captain Pilkington, the general's aide-de-camp, was severely wounded in defending the general's family. The French behaved with a cruelty almost unexampled in sea-fights, giving no quarter, and stabbing with their sabres even the sick in their hammocks. Previous to their boarding, the Kent had evidently the advantage, and had the crew been equally armed with offensive weapons, or had more musketry, the *Confiance* would, in all probability, have paid dearly for the rashness of her attempt. This is the same ship which was beat off formerly by the *Arniston*.¹ . . . In violation of the rights of humanity as those of war, the commander of the banditti who took them pillaged them of every article of wearing apparel, and after having done so put them, including six ladies, in an open Arab boat, with no other sustenance than a little bad water and some dates; in this dreadful state they continued four days, till they reached Calcutta.

As the writer's information must have been got from more appropriate in the mouth of a dying merchant-captain—to whom the assurance of his ship's safety is victory—than as spoken by the captain of a frigate which had just sailed out of port to fight an enemy of somewhat inferior force.

¹ This is probably a mistake; Cunat, at any rate, knew nothing about it, or he would have described it, even if he had to rate the *Arniston* as a line-of-battle ship.

the people in the boat, and as he dated his letter the day after the capture, the four days, at any rate, is a very evident exaggeration. Otherwise, so far as the bare facts are concerned, there is little to object to. Clearly the writer could know nothing about the liquor that was thrice served out, and he over-estimates the force of the *Confiance* both in guns and men; but on the whole his facts are fairly correct, judged even by M. Cunat's standard. The colouring of the whole affair is, of course, very different: brutality, or heroic determination; savage banditti, or worthy sons of France—the terms are interchangeable, according to the views and nationality of the writer. But in point of fact, the charges which the English reporter brings against the assailants are frankly enough admitted by Cunat. 'My lads,' he describes Surcouf as saying, as he turned the hands up, while the two ships were yet some distance apart, 'you mustn't let the look of this big fellow frighten you; it is not a ship of war; I pledge you my word it is only a Company's ship. She would indeed be too much for us with guns, so we'll board her. Get your arms ready. It'll be warm work no doubt; but you shall have an hour's pillage to pay you for it.'¹

The numbers on board the *Confiance* had been reduced by her many prizes: Cunat estimates them as about 130, on 7 October. It is impossible to say how many souls were on board the *Kent*: she had received some—possibly all—who had been saved when the *Queen*, a fellow-Indiaman, was burnt in San Salvador Bay, on the coast of Brazil; and may thus have held, what

¹ The actual words, according to Cunat, were: 'Pour prix de l'assaut terrible que vous allez livrer, je vous accorde une heure de pillage.'

with men, women, and children, nearly 200. This is, of course, no measure of the Kent's fighting strength: of men, she may have had about 150; but these were neither trained to arms, nor indeed had they arms. With the Kent's heavier armament, they might have done very well if they could have kept the *Confiance* at a distance: for hand-to-hand fighting they were utterly unprepared. When the *Confiance* ranged alongside and grappled the Indiaman; when musketry from her tops swept the Indiaman's decks; when Captain Rivington fell, killed by a grenade thrown from the privateer's main-yard; when the Frenchmen, Creoles, and Negroes, armed with cutlass and pistol, jumped on board, the Englishmen offered indeed such resistance as they could; but without a captain, without organisation, without skill, almost without arms, they were speedily beaten below, and their flag hauled down. The bulk of the Kent's crew were on the main-deck, stationed at the guns: the chief officer attempted to rally them and retake the ship; but they were unarmed and scattered: volleys of musketry were fired into them from the upper deck, and a determined charge swept them into the orlop, where a third struggle took place. 'It was warm,' says Cunat, 'for the Frenchmen were exasperated by the obstinate resistance of the enemy.' The warmth was mainly on one side; and the obstinate resistance was made with handspikes, rammers, or any bits of wood that could be picked up; as the result of which, the English lost 11 killed and 44 wounded: the French had 16 wounded, three of whom afterwards died.

And then came the pillage. Surcouf had promised it—French privateers frequently did; I daresay English

privateers did too—and the men were now determined to have it. And they did have it: in that Cunat agrees with the reporter; but on one point he differs, and I believe Cunat is right.

‘As soon,’ he says, ‘as Surcouf learned that there were ladies among the passengers, he himself went respectfully to reassure them, and had sentries placed on their cabins. Amongst them was a German princess, daughter of the Margrave of Anspach, who accompanied her husband, General St. John. One of these sentries was a young Creole named Durhône, with whom I was afterwards, in the years 1808–9, a fellow-prisoner at Pondicherry for eighteen months.¹ He has often spoken to me of the incidents of this combat, and amongst others, of his driving back two sailors who attempted to force his post.’

Undoubtedly, however, in this time of pillage, there was much roughness and excess: Cunat deplotes it, and says that Surcouf was much vexed at it, and cut the hour very short; but the English, who were the sufferers, naturally spoke of it in much stronger language. The next day the two ships made sail together for Mauritius, where they arrived about the middle of November; and Surcouf, feeling perhaps that he could now afford a holiday, agreed to take the *Confiance* back to France in her original capacity of merchant ship, although with a letter of marque, or, as the French and English then called such a ship, as an *aventurier*. On the passage he captured and ransomed for 10,000 dollars a Portuguese bound from Lisbon to Rio Janeiro; and, escaping the blockading squadron, although at one time hardly pressed, he anchored at Rochelle on 13 April, 1801.

¹ M. Cunat was a young officer on board the ‘*Adèle*’ privateer, which was captured by the 74-gun ship *Russell*, on 5 December, 1807.

The tender memory of Mlle. Blaize had very possibly a good deal to do with the home-coming of Robert Surcouf: he was married to her on 28 May; and the happy couple went to spend the honeymoon and their spare cash in Paris. They then took up their abode at St. Malo, where, if the peace, which about this time intervened, had continued, Surcouf would probably have settled down into a respectable merchant and ship-owner. The change from a life of rude adventure was very great, and his wild energy found various outlets and gave rise to a number of semi-comical anecdotes. This is one:

In investing his money, which must have amounted to a very considerable sum, he became the owner of a house then occupied by M. Bléchamp, the father of Mme. Lucien Bonaparte, holding in St. Malo the office of naval commissioner and marine superintendent.¹ For some reason which does not appear, Bléchamp was annoyed at the sale of his house: possibly he wished to buy it himself; possibly he thought a merchant skipper's buying a house over the head of a naval commissioner was a piece of impertinence: at any rate, he permitted himself to speak somewhat slightly of his new landlord. The disparaging remark was repeated, of course with exaggerations, until it reached his landlord's ears: and a formal notice to quit at the end of the term was the immediate consequence. Shortly afterwards Surcouf was told that his tenant, in preparing to move out, was carrying away a number of the fixtures. He took measures to ascertain that it really was so; and having armed himself with a pistol, proceeded to the house, forced his way in past the orderly at the door, and

¹ *Commissaire-ordonnateur*: we have nothing exactly corresponding.

rushing upstairs, found a workman busy taking down the cranks of the bells. He had him down the ladder in less than no time ; and the bell-hanger, terrified out of his wits at the sight of the pistol, took to his heels and fled. Surcouf then marched into the office, and, with angry voice and gesture, demanded to see the commissioner. M. Bléchamp was fortunately not at home ; but when he came in and learned what had happened, he made out an order to Surcouf to repair to Brest immediately, and sent it by a couple of gendarmes, who had instructions to accompany him. Surcouf, who was not only a rated merchant captain, of several years seniority, but had, some time before, 29 June, 1800, been appointed an unattached ensign in the navy, felt the indignity thus put upon him. In order to evade it, he pretended to be sick, too sick to travel ; and meantime wrote an account of the affair to his friends in Paris, and to Decrès, the minister of the navy, demanding redress for the way in which the commissioner had abused his power. When he thought his letters must have reached Paris, he managed to slip out of his house unknown to the sentries at his door, and set off for Brest in a post-chaise. The commissioner, however, having discovered the evasion, sent off the gendarmes riding post after him, and one of them overtook him at the last stage. Surcouf was determined not to appear in Brest as a prisoner ; and between him and the gendarme there was a lively altercation, in which—as it would appear—the pistol was again produced. They managed, however, to compromise matters, and the gendarme agreed to follow the post-chaise at such a distance as to seem in no way connected with it. Surcouf thus drove into Brest, and went at

once to report himself to the prefect, who had already received a telegraphic message very much in his favour. The conduct of M. Bléchamp was disapproved; and in the end, he was sentenced to make compensation for the damage he had done to Surcouf's property.

When the war with England again broke out, the first consul, who had heard of Surcouf as a thorn in the side of his enemy, sent for him, and is said, in a personal interview, to have proposed giving him the rank of captain in the navy, and the actual command of two frigates, for a cruise in the Indian seas. It is impossible to say how far this proposal was real: that something of the sort was said is possible; but it is still more possible that Surcouf's vanity mistook a vague suggestion for a definite proposal. Whatever it may have been, he declined it; not choosing to subject himself to the orders of an admiral, even though that admiral were Linois, 'whose prowess at Algesiras was,' according to M. Cunat, 'the presage of a series of brilliant successes.' M. Linois's successes in the East are a favourite theme with a certain class of minor French historians, but no one has ever yet calmly and honestly enumerated them. So far as I can trace them, they were of a distinctly negative character: his success against the fleet of merchant ships under Commodore Dance, on 14 February, 1804; his success in Vizagapatam Roads, on 18 September, 1804; his success against the convoy escorted by the *Blenheim*, on 7 and 8 August, 1805, would each, in the English service, have merited a court-martial, and been rewarded with a severe reprimand.

As we have said, even under the orders of an admiral so distinguished, Surcouf declined to serve. He was

made a Chevalier of the Legion of Honour; but he preferred the company, or the rule, of Mme. Surcouf, *née* Blaize, to that of even the hero of Algesiras; and devoted himself, his talents, and his capital, to fitting out a number of privateers, and carrying on the war in his own fashion, and very much, it would appear, to his own profit. One, the *Caroline* brig, he despatched to the Indian Ocean, under the command of his brother Nicolas, whom the peace of Amiens had, presumably, set at liberty. Two others cruised in the Channel. It was not till towards the end of 1806, when news had come of the capture of *Linois* in the *Marengo*, on 18 March, that Surcouf could resolve to adventure himself. He then had a ship specially built, a ship of 400 tons, carrying 18 guns and 192 men; and, as indicating his return to his former station, he called her the *Revenant*. Now *revenant*, which primarily means 'one who comes back,' has the every-day though secondary meaning of 'a ghost;' and Surcouf, in grim humour, gave his vessel a ghost for a figure-head—a corpse in the act of throwing off its shroud. This ghostly craft put to sea on 2 March, 1807, and in due time arrived at the Isle of France.

Of his petty adventures on the way, it would be tedious to speak; but the discipline and drill which Surcouf established on board the *Revenant*, a privateer pure and simple, are worth noticing. The tactics to which he trusted for success were closing and boarding as soon as possible: it would clearly be very bad policy to remain at a distance, pounding and being pounded with great guns, till the enemy—and possibly also the *Revenant*—was reduced to a wreck: the value of his

prize would be less ; the difficulty of sending her into port might be very great ; and his own cruise might be brought to an untimely end. Besides all which, many of the large Indiamen carried a much heavier armament than the *Revenant*, and might very well be able to beat her off or disable her, if only they could keep her at a proper distance. Surcouf's object was, therefore, to train his men for close fighting ; and for this end he established systematic exercise with small arms and cutlass. Fencing, sword-play, or shooting at a bottle hanging from one of the studding-sail booms, occupied a great part of the time. And not only had he to drill them to the use of arms : he had to train them to their work as sailors, and to teach them the habits of civilised beings. He had, too, a most unpromising lot of raw material. Cunat is not likely to have erred in the direction of unduly disparaging a French crew ; he prefers speaking in terms of exaggerated praise ; so that, in the present instance, his evidence may be frankly accepted. The crew of the *Revenant* was—he says—a heterogeneous collection of men of every country and of every profession, recruited from all possible quarters, even from prisons and hospitals. Such a ship's company was a mixture of all conceivable vices ; to maintain strict discipline was at once important and difficult ; and very severe punishments were requisite. The captain's manner of life was thus the very opposite of that free-and-easy association which is commonly supposed to be the essence of privateering. Surcouf, we are told, maintained an extreme formality, even with his officers : they were sometimes invited to dine with him ; but, ordinarily, he spoke to no one but the first lieutenant or

the officer of the watch : when he came on the quarter deck, no one but himself might walk the weather side more frequently he reclined on the taffrail, smoking, in company with a few passengers, towards whom he did not preserve the same formality. His system answered he got his crew well together and in good order ; they became, in the words of Cunat, ‘ brave sailors, true sons of old Armorica.’ And, as commonly happens, success followed on painstaking.

After refitting, and when the south-west monsoon in the Bay of Bengal was coming to an end, Surcouf took up his old cruising-ground : the frigate *Piémontaise* was there also ; and the two continued for several months virtual masters of the bay. This was particularly hard on the merchants of Calcutta, whose commerce had only the year before, been similarly scourged by the *Bellone* privateer, commanded by one Jacques Perroud. The *Bellone*, however, had been happily caught on 9 July, 1806, as in a trap, between the coast of Ceylon the *Little Basses*, the *Rattlesnake* sloop, and the 74-gun ship *Powerful*. Several other privateers were caught about the same time, ‘ but ’—wrote Sir Edward Pellew, better known, perhaps, as Lord Exmouth, who then commanded in India—‘ I reflect with much pleasure on the capture of *La Bellone* in particular, as well from her superior sailing, as her uncommon success in the present and preceding war against the British commerce, in the Indian and European seas. The commercial interests of this country are particularly secured by her capture, which could not have been expected but under very favourable circumstances.’

Things had thus looked brighter at Calcutta ; and

now this Revenant, in company with the Piémontaise, was making them worse than ever. The East India Company, and the independent merchants of Bombay, had been in the habit of collecting their ships in convoys, a system which those of Calcutta had disdained, as causing delay. The loss thus fell almost entirely on them, merchants, shipowners, and underwriters; and they lost not only their money, but also their temper. They sent a wildly angry memorial to the admiralty, blaming everybody, except themselves; and more especially charging the admiral with neglecting their interests. This document, dated 10 December, 1807, says:—

‘Your memorialists cannot decline the painful duty of more particularly adverting to the recent capture of no less than nineteen British ships and vessels within the short period of two months, and at a station which the regular visitation of the enemy’s cruisers, at the opening of the north-east monsoon, obviously pointed out as pre-eminently requiring protection. . . . All the captures to which your memorialists here particularly refer were made in the Bay of Bengal by two French frigates, and a privateer named the Revenant, of 16 guns. It was the lot of this privateer to make the greater part of these captures; and his depredations were committed chiefly in view of the coast of Coromandel, where he has remained upwards of three months, distant little more than 400 miles from Calcutta, and within 100 leagues of Madras Roads, the principal station of his Majesty’s ships; and where, at the same time, the flag of a British rear-admiral, and several of his Majesty’s pennants, were displayed. It will scarcely be believed that the privateer, in which the enemy has thus extended with success his depredations along our defenceless shores, still continues on his station; and notwithstanding the extent of the British naval force in this

this successful privateer, already so destructive to our commerce, and though of a force contemptible when compared with the smallest of his Majesty's ships, continues to spread consternation throughout the ports of India. . . . Nor can your memorialists foresee any probable cause to induce the enemy's privateer to relinquish the station he thus triumphantly maintains, until the number of his captures be such as to require more men to navigate them than the privateer can supply, or until, satiated with success, he may voluntarily retire from our coast. . . . Your memorialists conceive that there is no similar instance of a privateer continuing an uninterrupted series of operations for a period of upwards of three months, on a coast of the British empire, in the direct track of their chief navigation, and within less than 300 miles of a principal station of his Majesty's ships: nor do your memorialists believe that the most extensive branch of British commerce, either European or colonial, ever suffered such a series of single captures, in so short a period, as has been made by the Revenant privateer, on the coast of Coromandel.'

And they go on to say that the sums paid by the insurance offices in Calcutta alone, for losses during September and October 1807, amounted to no less than 291,256*l*.

Sir Edward Pellew had little difficulty in showing that, beyond the necessary hazard in time of war, the fault was mainly their own, inasmuch as they had neglected or refused the convoy which had been liberally offered. And the numbers of French privateers—among others the *Adèle*, already spoken of—captured by the English cruisers at this very time; the capture of the *Piémontaise* herself a few months later, 8 March, 1808; and the fact that the *Revenant* was repeatedly but vainly chased, sufficiently show that her success was due not to any carelessness of the admiral, or of the captains under

him, but to her own superior sailing, and still more to the care and watchfulness of her captain. How much these last, the personality of Surcouf himself, had to do with it, would seem established by the future fortunes of the ship.

By the middle of January, 1808, the time spoken of by the Calcutta merchants had arrived: the *Revenant's* crew was reduced to 70, and Surcouf determined to return to the Mauritius, where he anchored on the 31st of the month. When the ship was again ready, he sent her to sea in the charge of Potier, his chief officer, to look for a Portuguese, homeward-bound from Goa, of which he had intelligence. Potier took up his station on the coast of Natal, where, on 24 May, he sighted, overtook, and captured the object of his search. The Portuguese is described as a ship of the largest size, of—we may suppose—1,200 or 1,500 tons; pierced for 64 guns, but actually mounting 84; and having on board, amongst other passengers, a body of 50 soldiers—possibly invalids. In mere numerical estimation, the disparity was excessive: but the question was really one of the relative value of men and arms on board a merchant ship and a ship of war. Against such numbers of men and soldiers, presumably effective, Potier felt that their usual tactics would be rash; he was obliged to try, in the first instance to reduce, or at any rate, to weaken, the enemy by force of guns; and so, taking up and cleverly maintaining a position on her quarter, he kept up a continuous fire. The mark was big, and every shot told; whilst the fire of the Portuguese, at a smaller target, was wild and desultory: presently her port-lanyards were cut by grape shot; the guns were blinded, and the sea was too heavy to risk blowing the port-lids away. On deck, the

soldiers, passengers, and men taken from the useless gulls, plied the assailant with musketry, and were answered with showers of grape and langridge; the fight was going on briskly, and the merchant ship was bravely holding her own, when, through some carelessness, a barrel of powder caught a spark and blew up. The accident was decisive, and after a few minutes' vain attempt to overcome its effect, the Portuguese was compelled to lower her flag.¹

When the privateer and her prize returned to Port Louis—which, having discarded the republican name of Port North-West, was now Port Napoleon—the governor, General Decaen, laid his official hands on the *Revenant*. The French men-of-war on the station had just then been practically wiped out: the last of them, the *Semillante* frigate, had returned disabled, barely escaping from the *Terpsichore*. The resources of the colony were not equal to refitting the *Sémillante* as an effective ship of war; and Decaen accordingly claimed the *Revenant*, which he established as a corvette. Surcouf in vain protested against the forced sale of his property, which to him seemed very like confiscation. Decaen was not only firm, but threatened to embark Surcouf on board her as a sub-lieutenant—an ensign. Forced thus to yield to fate, Surcouf accepted the command of the *Semillante*, which had been bought by a mercantile house at Port Louis, had been re-named the *Charles*, and was

¹ M Cunat's note may be here properly reproduced: 'The account of this combat is taken from the journals kindly lent me by my friends MM. Lamarre-Pigné, Michel-Villeblanche, and A. Duhaut-Cilly, distinguished sailors and companions of Captain Potier.' The combat is unquestionably a very brilliant episode in the history of privateering, even though Surcouf personally had nothing to do with it.

now fitting to go home as an *aventurier*. When this was agreed on, a fresh quarrel arose with the governor, who gave Surcouf a positive order to carry to France all the officers of the Portuguese ship, lately captured. Surcouf refused, pointing out that his doing so would be extremely dangerous, as his crew was very largely composed of Portuguese sailors, who had preferred service to imprisonment, but—with their own officers to lead them—might probably prefer Lisbon to St. Malo as a destination. Decaen would not listen to his objections, but bluntly said that unless the Charles took the prisoners, he would not sign her clearance. In order to get his legal papers, therefore, Surcouf was compelled to receive the prisoners; and with them on board put to sea on the morning of 21 November; but as soon as he got an offing, he unceremoniously bundled them and their traps into the pilot-boat, leaving them to make the best of their way on shore, whilst the Charles, under a press of sail, was leaving the island far behind. Decaen was furious, and sequestrated all Surcouf's property in the colony; in happy ignorance of which Surcouf pursued his way, and reached France in safety, though not without risks run both from the English cruisers and from shipwreck. It was his last voyage, and, ending successfully, as did all his other voyages, we cannot but assign a large share of credit to this man, who at such a time and under such circumstances as his, pursued such a career, without one single instance of what the world is apt to call bad luck, but which is more frequently the result of bad management. Uniform success means unceasing care.

The Revenant, which, under Surcouf's command, had

cruised—as the memorialists of Calcutta had pointed out,—for five months in the very thick of the English squadron, was sent, as the *Jean* corvette, commanded by Lieutenant Morice, to cruise on the same station. She had scarcely got well into the Bay of Bengal, before, on 8 October, she was captured by the *Modeste*. Nor was this difference of fortune only for Lieutenant Morice, who seems to have been a brave and able officer. The ship was again re-named *Victor*, and put to sea as an English man-of-war, commanded by Captain Edward Stopford, one of a family whose name has been honourably known in our navy for the last hundred years. About a year afterwards, 2 November, 1809, she was captured by the French frigate *Bellone*; and still keeping the name of *Victor*, again became a French corvette. As such, she was surrendered at the capitulation of Mauritius, 3 December, 1810, and was—I believe—broken up.¹

Surcouf had meantime claimed and obtained an order for the restitution of his property in Mauritius, and had settled down on shore as the owner of a fleet of privateers. M. Cunat names eight of his ships employed in European seas; one of which, the *Renard*—a cutter of 70 tons, with a crew of 60 men, mostly Portuguese—fought, on 9 September, 1813, one of the most desperate actions on record, with the *Alpheia* schooner, of 111 tons and 41 men and boys. The *Renard*'s armament consisted

¹ In attempting this comparative estimate of Surcouf's abilities, it must not be forgotten that he had—in the matter of escaping pursuit—one great advantage over both Stopford and Morice. In presence of any probable danger, it was his first business to get away from it: it was the business of these others rather to see if they could not overcome the danger.

of ten 8-pounder carronades, and four 4-pounders; that of the *Alpheia*, of eight 18-pounder carronades. Between the two, there was not much to choose in point of strength; and the fight continued with equal fortune and fury until by—what James has called—a fatal accident, the *Alpheia* blew up. It would seem uncertain whether any of Surcouf's cruisers found their way to Eastern waters: Cunaat does not speak of any; but a letter from Vice-Admiral Bertie, the commander-in-chief at the Cape of Good Hope, to the secretary of the admiralty, dated 2 September, 1809, would imply that Surcouf had not forgotten the scene of his own exploits.

'Of the number of *aventuriers* fitted out and running for the Isle of France, I am to state that the *Charwell* has captured the *Hyène*, a very fine vessel of 230 tons, pierced for 18 guns and masted as a man-of-war, which is arrived here; and the '*Néréide*' has captured the *Agile*, of a similar description . . . and it appears, by an intercepted letter found on board the latter vessel, addressed by Captain Surcouf to General Decaen, that, besides a number of privateers fitting out by himself and a society of merchants with whom he is associated, he is in treaty with the Minister of Marine for the *La Revanche* frigate, which they intend to arm and send out with a cargo!'

Whatever schemes of this sort Surcouf may have had were of course put an end to by the capture of Mauritius; and the peace, in 1814, necessarily altered the nature of his business. He continued, however, a prosperous ship-owner and ship-builder, and one of the most influential burghers of St. Malo, until his death in 1827.

In person, Robert Surcouf was somewhat short and stout; in his later years, almost corpulent. His whole life having been spent in command, often of very rugged

subjects, his force of character was strongly developed; and in civil life he was often violent if not brutal. M. Cunat tells many anecdotes illustrative of this, which he considers a most honourable feature; they are not worth repeating, and are very possibly grossly exaggerated. In his family he was brusque and taciturn; little given to talk over past adventures, except, occasionally, when the pride of an old privateer led him to relate the story of the capture of the *Kerr*. Withal, generous to the poor. One anecdote not less grotesque, perhaps, but less rude than others, will enable us to part from him in kindlier mood. Walking home one night, as he passed the gate of his ship-building yard, he saw a man come out carrying a heavy bundle, which he vainly tried to hoist up on his shoulders. Surcouf went up to him and asked what he was doing. The man, who, in the dark, did not recognise him, said, 'You might give us a lift up with this bundle of wood, that's a good fellow.' 'Did anyone give it you, then?' asked the owner. 'Faith no,' was the answer: 'I might have waited long enough for that.' Surcouf made no further objection, and helped the man to get the bundle on his back; only, as he went off muttering his thanks, the owner called after him—'I advise you not to try that on again: M. Surcouf is just the man to have you taken up for it.'

Surcouf is gone; honourably buried at St. Malo beneath a tombstone which—according to the picture of it given by M. Cunat—bears a ridiculous likeness to a clock-face. Another war may very well see a successor, his equal in daring and conduct, playing the same part on a larger field. The points to which I have specially wished to call attention are those facts which may be

repeated in the future; and—whether a ship corresponding to the *Confiance* or the *Revenant* is commanded by an independent rover, or by a regularly-commissioned officer—the capture of the *Kent*, and the destruction of trade in the Bay of Bengal, are incidents which a bold enemy will try to repeat in the next naval war. What the Bay of Bengal was at the beginning of the north-east monsoon, the several ‘crossings’ will be now. And the trade that will be aimed at on these will be, not the wealth of the East, but the every-day necessities of English life—the corn, the beef, the mutton. The stress will be felt not by a few wealthy merchants or brokers in Calcutta, but by the millions of hungry fathers of starving children in London, in Liverpool, in Manchester, and throughout the length and breadth of the country. Are ships laden with these invaluable commodities able to fight their way or to run the gauntlet of the enemy’s cruisers? It was seen in 1807 how difficult it was to stop the ravages of one ship ably commanded, even when her cruising ground was known within a comparatively short distance, and when there was an overpowering naval force almost on the spot. A similar difficulty may again occur; a similar problem may demand a solution: but in this, as in other things, to be forewarned is, or should be, to be forearmed.

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